

Cambridgeshire Agriculture Scrapbook 1897 to 1990

CAMBRIDGE DAILY NEWS, Saturday, March 1, 1930

THE CRISIS IN AGRICULTURE

Great Demonstration on Parker's Piece This Afternoon

A CALL TO THE GOVERNMENT



Photo: Cambridge Daily News.

Our picture gives some idea of the huge crowd assembled on the Piece.

"This mass meeting, representing all sections of the industry, views with the utmost concern the present position in agriculture, the increase in unemployment amongst agricultural workers, the amount of land going out of cultivation, and the lack of confidence created thereby. The meeting, therefore, desires to place before His Majesty's Government its unanimous opinion that measures should be taken to assure to farmers a remunerative price for cereals. Further, the meeting is of the opinion that the position calls for the sinking of all party differences, and desires to impress upon Parliament, His Majesty's Government and the Public, that unless effective steps are at once taken to meet the situation, nothing but calamity faces the industry."

Facts, Features and (occasional) Fallacies
reported in Cambridge Newspapers
summarised by

Mike Petty

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Most of these stories originally appeared in the Cambridge Daily/Evening/News or the
Cambridgeshire Weekly News, its sister title.

They are supplemented by some articles published in the
Cambridge Independent Press or Cambridge Chronicle

Most were featured in my 'Looking Back' column in the Cambridge News from 1996-2014

The complete 'Cambridgeshire Scrapbook' of which this is a small section is published online at
bit.ly/CambsCollection

<https://archive.org/search.php?query=creator%3A%22Mike%20Petty%22>

I have digital and other copies of most of the stories summarised.
Many may be read on Flickr in Albums headed '*Cambs News*'
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/153171359@N04/albums>

The original volumes are housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library
where there are many other indexes dating back to 1770.

They also have detailed newspaper cuttings files on over 750 topics that have been compiled since the
1960s.

Newspapers sometimes get things wrong. I copy things out incorrectly. Do check

There are a multitude of spelling and layout errors. Please forgive or correct them

News never stops but this file was finished on 31 August 2016.

I will maintain supplements and corrections – contact me for anything you need

Please make what use of these notes that you may. Kindly remember where they came from

See my website – www.mikepetty.org.uk for further notes.

Mike Petty, Stretham

2018

Cambridgeshire Agriculture Scrapbook 1897-1990

Includes farming, agriculture, Land Settlement, plough, smallholdings, stubble, sugar beet, threshing, machines tithe, tractor

1897 07 03

The Hunts Agricultural Society, which can boast of being senior to the Royal, held its 61st annual exhibition in the county town. The Jubilee celebrations have exercised a depressing effect upon holiday-makers and that fact will sufficiently account for the somewhat small attendance of visitors. It is a good sign that the speakers dwelt far less than is customary upon the topic of agricultural depressions. We may fairly assume that the worst is over and that while the agricultural interest is not perhaps sharing in the wonderful prosperity of the country in so great a degree as other branches of industry, yet even they have escaped from the low levels so generally prevalent a few years ago.

1897 12 03

Cottenham ploughing match, p3

1898 05 24

Mr H. D. Taylor, of Haverhill has had the misfortune to lose a useful carthorse. It appears that he had dispatched the horse in charge of a man to do some ploughing in a field near to Withersfield road. In order to reach the field a temporary bridge spanning a watercourse had to be crossed. While so during the horse, which was a young one, shied and fell off the bridge, a distance of about 12 feet, breaking its back. The poor animal was at once killed. We understand this makes two horses and three foals Mr Taylor has lost within the last five weeks.

1898 08 10

Joseph Martin of Littleport told the Agricultural Committee on National Wheat Stores that he was not in favour of a reserve. He said "It is most remunerative, growing wheat. I am of the opinion that if you could by any means guarantee a better price for wheat there would be many more thousands of acres. I am in the fen district. It is really a wheat growing country. But a good deal of the heavy land has gone out of cultivation entirely and grass has taken the place of wheat"

1898 09 28

Gransden agricultural show, p3

1898 12 07

Cottenham ploughing match, p3

1898 12 10

Ploughing at Barley, p2

1899 02 10

Cambridge University have favoured the establishment of an Agricultural Department and the creation of a Professorship of Agriculture. Students who are likely in the future to be owners or managers of land will have the opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of the scientific principles underlying the sound practice of agriculture and of the ways in which our ancestors met problems and difficulties which they, like us, had to face.

1899 08 21

Sir - For the past two years I have been cultivating a piece of land at Burwell and selling the produce, which consists chiefly of vegetables, at Cambridge. One piece of this land is in the fen, and one piece is high land. The solicitor for the University claimed tithe rent for the land in the fen. I have proved the piece of land which was under water for years previous to the time of my father and others who drained it, was not titheable. I was tried at the County Court by the Registrar, who refused to hear my witness, the oldest man in Burwell, who could give evidence as to the history of this matter. Now the

bailiff has taken about £20 worth of oats and potatoes for a claim of £2 0s 10d from the piece of land I offered to pay tithe on. Where is justice in this case, after the paying of parson's heavy tithe rent? - Joseph Manning

1899 08 25

A serious attempt has been made to ascertain why agricultural labourers are becoming so scarce and while they are still boys take their flight to the town. Young people find the country dull. Travel is easy in these days and Hodge is not so ill off that he cannot make one of an excursion party to town and gaze in wonder and admiration upon its sights and to become so infected with its eager, eventful life that he can never be quite happy in the country again. But in spite of crowded streets and gaily lighted music halls, the farm worker would not leave the farm were it not that the town offers him much better wages. English agricultural labourers are not the most intelligent class in the community, but they are not fools. They would be fools if an opportunity offer them of doubling their weekly pittance of ten or twelve shillings and they did not seize it

1899 09 18

During August agricultural workers have been fully employed at harvest work. The corn crops have ripened rapidly, and as they have not been laid by storms, it has been possible to employ self-binding machines. Thus with a steady run of fine weather the harvest has been gathered rapidly with much less manual labour than usual. Reports from the Chesterton Union show that sufficient labour has been secured for fruit picking, except for a short time when the raspberries were ripe.

1899 10 13

A considerable amount of dissatisfaction has arisen in regard to the tithe charge imposed on certain lands in Burwell fen by Cambridge University. The land in question is some 3,000 acres in extent and was formerly under water. Nearly 60 years ago the fen was drained. The greater part is utilised for agriculture, but a portion is cultivated as market gardens. The imposition of a tithe has weighed heavily on the owners and there has been speculation as to the legality of the charge. No tithe was exacted until after the drainage about 1840 and while some owners have paid others have been allowed to go scot free. Now the parish council has purchased ten acres for a public recreation ground and decline to pay the tithe

1899 11 30

The annual ploughing competitions of the Cottenham Ploughing Society were brought off. Mr Greene said they lived in days of invention; they already had steam ploughs, which did not make much headway, and it was very likely they would see motor ploughs in the future. He believed the day was far distant when the need of a good horse to draw the plough, and of a good man to drive it would no longer exist in Cottenham. A feature of the competition was the good ploughing of F. Skinner who has entered four times and on each occasion taken first place.

1900

1900 06 09

The annual show of the Hunts Agricultural Society took place in the Hassock Meadow, Ramsey, and the only thing to mar the exhibition was the unpropitious weather. During the morning horse shoeing and poultry trussing demonstrations took place, and there were lectures on butter making and kindred subjects, which had an attraction for many. A large number of the gentry and agriculturists from the surrounding countryside put in an appearance.

1900 12 05

Cottenham ploughing match, p3

1901 03 22 c

The Department of Trade reports that although snow and wet weather interfered in some districts with work on the land, such as ploughing, sowing and harrowing, generally speaking, agricultural labourers

were well employed during February at such work as manure carting and spreading, hedging, ditching, threshing, wood cutting, road mending, looking after stock and assisting at lambing. In Huntingdonshire field work was generally carried on without much interruption. Agricultural labourers in Cambridgeshire were generally well employed and in the Royston Union a short supply is reported

1901 08 09

Writing in the London Daily Express Mr Rider Haggard reported on conditions in Lt Downham. Cottages were distinctly bad, many owned by small people who could not afford to keep them up. Often they contained two rooms and no more, in consequence of which overcrowding there was much immorality. The reason that the population remained stationary there was that no new cottages were built in place of those which decayed. Smallholders lived worse than the labourers; they rarely have any other meat than pork, their dinner consists of suet pudding and bread.

1902 03 08

It is one of those purely agricultural villages which struggle in unequal rivalry with the urban prosperous population. Crops of barley, peas and roots are not sufficient attraction to country folk who steadily migrate to industrial centres. The church is not pretty, the covering is peeling off in places though the interior is in good repair and of cheerful aspect. But unfortunate domestic troubles at the vicarage resulted in justices granting a judicial separation and the Bishop of Ely has declared the living vacant. The vicar has been, as it were, expelled from the parish. "I really do not know what I shall do. I have formed no plan", he said, adding that a prominent parishioner had done everything in his power to make things unpleasant and try to drive him out. [Village was Cowlinge]

1902 05 31 c

Cambridge is the centre of a prosperous agricultural district. To the north lie the fens, a rich corn-growing district; to the south and east are light sheep and barley lands and to the west heavy clay lands which, in past times, have produced large wheat supplies, but which now in consequence of agricultural depression, have been largely laid down to grass.

1902 07 24

Chatteris, right in the heart of the breeders' country was the venue for the 1902 show of the Cambridgeshire Agricultural Society. It welcomed the society with open arms decorating its few streets as gaily as flags and bunting would allow. Visitors leaving the station passed under a triumphal arch of evergreens with the word 'Welcome' on the arrival side and 'Success to Agriculture' on the reverse. The number of entries and the attendance of the public were records and by mid-day 2,450 people had passed the turnstiles.

1902 08 30

In Lincolnshire some experiments have just been made with a petrol motor specially designed to assist in harvesting operations. The new motor, attached to a reaper and binder, cut a field of barley in excellent style. After cutting the crop it drew the laden wagons from the field, and may also be attached to machinery for chaff cutting, pulping roots, threshing or grinding corn. It has also been tried with a double throw plough. On the point of cost it compares most favourably with horse teams and much less time is lost in handling. It can do the work of which a horse is capable and the cost of keeping or hiring a steam engine is thus to a great extent saved

1903 10 28

In recent years so many gloomy predictions have been made concerning the decline in the birth rate that Lincolnshire Agricultural Society offered a prize for the labourers who had brought up the greatest number of children. It was won by Thomas Hought of Market Rasen with a record of 19 children born, 17 brought up and 12 placed out. It is quite refreshing to find that John Bull has still left a remnant of sturdy sons and daughters possessing the faculty of perpetuating their species. That such large families should still be common in rural districts at a time when the urban birth rate is declining is proof of the damaging effects of city life and air upon the national health and vitality.

1903 12 30

A crusade against the house sparrow has been launched by the Board of Agriculture. They are welcomed by the town dweller as a picturesque addition to the wilderness of streets amid which he passes most of his life. But when cornfields are in proximity to the outskirts of the town it is no uncommon thing to find that a whole grain crop has been ruined by the ravages of a multitude of the birds. They inflict damage upon garden produce, stripping gooseberry and red currant bushes of their buds, tearing in pieces flowers such as crocuses and pulling up rows of newly-sown peas. Sparrows have become a pest and no more sympathy need be wasted upon them than is bestowed upon rats.

1904 03 29

It is certain that the farm motor has got a footing and much more will be heard of it before long. If prices could only be reduced somewhat a number of farmers, disgusted with the short time made by horse teams and appreciative of the advantage of being able with a fast and powerful tractor to choose favourable weather for tackling their arable, would be disposed to give motor ploughing a fair trial. Motor farming is likely to result in a more thorough cultivator of the land and not be an extension of those deplorable land-scratching and acres-grasping methods of which many pitiful examples may be seen on clay soils. Simplification of the mechanism is to be expected and it remains to be seen whether the proposed substitution of steam for petrol is wholly advantageous.

1905 08 26

At Willingham the labourers go to work at seven o'clock in the morning and work until eleven. Then he has his luncheon (or 'docky' as he calls it) and begins again at noon, working for another four hours when his day's work is done. He does not necessarily work until four for he has to get to his home then and leaves in such time as to allow him to arrive comfortably. Likewise if his work lies at a distance from his cottage he does not get to his place at work at seven but leaves home at that hour. But he doesn't get high wages. 05 08 26d

1905 12 04

Gog Magog Hills serious fire overheating threshing machine – 05 12 04

1906 02 10

Sugar beet industry experiments, Essex – 06 02 10b

1906 04 27

Royston tithes, p2

1906 08 03

Burwell is included in a Government scheme for colonising England by offering vacant Crown land to smallholders. A start has been made with a farm of 916 acres which is being cut up into parcels of between two and twenty acres and let to the Cambs Small Holders Association. There are some excellent cottages, two farmhouses and farm buildings and these are being allotted to the new tenants who will enter upon their holdings at Michaelmas. 06 08 03

1906 08 20

Those who did not experience the terrific storm which crossed the county could hardly realise the extent of the damage. It almost totally destroyed the crops as it passed. At Whittlesey later wheat was absolutely ruined and the beans were cut to atoms. Near Huntingdon some of the crops had not only no corn left but the straw was gone too. Nearer Cambridge the hail was not quite so heavy but in several places there was not a single piece of corn left. It simply meant ruin for the farmers. 06 08 20 & a

1906 08 24

A disastrous fire broke out at Place Farm, Balsham; flames spread to Mr Price's farm opposite and the premises adjoining were quickly demolished. There was panic, as it seemed flames would spread to

neighbouring cottages and the road to Balsham was strewn with household furniture. The Queens Head, a thatched public house, caught fire six or seven times and was only saved from destruction with great difficulty. Linton fire fighters worked like Trojans but were hampered by the inadequacy of the water supply 06 08 24

1906 09 04

Serious farm fire, Hanchett End near Haverhill – 06 09 04

1906 10 11

Small holdings in Cambridgeshire are at last an accomplished fact as half a hundred agricultural labourers, small farmers, farmers' sons and village tradesmen enter into possession of nearly a thousand acres of Crown land at Burwell, parcelled out in lots to suit the capacity of this little army. But the scheme had attracted a great deal of criticism and will be watched with keen interest. 06 10 11a & b

1906 10 25

Cambridge councillors adopted new bye-laws for driving cattle through the streets. Now no bull may be led unless it is properly secured by a ring through its nose, no cattle may be driven unless sufficiently attended and no person shall permit a cow with a calf to be driven in any street unless the calf is conveyed in a cart or other suitable vehicle. 06 10 25a

1906 10 27

Gt Bradley serious farm fire – 06 10 27d

1907 05 15

A meeting called to consider the disastrous consequences to agricultural labourers when farms were made into small holdings heard from men formerly employed on the Crown Lands farms, Burwell who had been turned out of house and home. But another meeting at West Row heard of the serious depopulation of rural districts and supported the Government's plans to bring the land within the reach of the people. 07 05 15 a & b

1907 05 22

Claims have been made about the impact of smallholdings on Burwell. But our reporter found no outward sign of unemployment, no discontented farm labourers on village corners, no despondent tradesmen lounging outside empty shops. Quite the contrary: Burwell wore its customary air of quiet prosperity. It is said the 'discontented' men received 'a good feed, all the beer they could drink and half-a-dollar' from the MP for East Cambridgeshire for attending a meeting. 07 05 22 & a

1907 06 20

Burwell labourers claim they were thrown out of work when the Government converted farms into smallholdings. But they were all paid compensation and most quickly found work at practically the same wages as before. Each received fifty shillings for 'costs of removal' but the farmers removed their belongings for them free. Demand for labour has been greater than before and the Highway Surveyors had difficulty getting granite carted as the men were so busy on the smallholdings. 07 06 20a & b

1907 08 01

The sunny side of the Burwell Small Holdings experiment is very attractive. Viewing a snug cottage pleasantly set among several acres of pasture land, shaded by a collection of ancient trees, with a spacious kitchen and flower garden near at hand, a town dweller is envious of the men who have set up on the Crown Lands. The scheme has met exceptionally fierce criticism but after one season's results it can be pronounced a success. 07 08 01 & a

1907 11 23

Burwell smallholdings, p3

1908 01 10

On dark winter mornings milking operations are conducted by lamplight at Newton Hall Farm. This part of the day's duties done, master and men left the cowsheds but one labourer noticed smoke curling from the barn. With this perturbing news he disturbed the well-earned breakfast of the farmer and his family and from that time the peaceful farm was the centre of a commotion and bustle, the like of which was previously unknown in Newton. Before the disastrous fire was finally checked some remarkable scenes occurred. 08 01 10c

1908 01 17

Canada has many miles of fertile land only awaiting the plough and the harrow, the farmer and the fruit grower to yield an abundance of food to the world and increase the wealth of those who can and will work. For labourers of the 'right stuff' there is plenty of work, good homes and good wages. There is no room for fellows who won't work but unlimited opportunities for men who will, meetings at Cambridge Guildhall and Willingham were told. Emigrants should contact Mr A. Suttle, 109 Fitzroy Street, the agent for Canada. 08 01 17d & e

1908 02 07

A meeting was held at Isleham to explain the new Small Holdings Act. The soil is right, means of communication are all that can be desired and the class of people, if properly selected, are second to none. It would keep people on the land. The Rev Newling, Baptist pastor, said he helped at his brother's farm at Wisbech during the fruit season and often paid £50 a week for labour to the pickers on Saturday morning. 08 02 07 e

1908 04 04

Sir – the idea of electricity generated by peat gas appeals to residents in the Fen country where peat is so plentiful. The black swamp possesses theoretical heat values not far below coal when thoroughly dried. When economically farmed, stored, dried and made fit for burning by steam boilers or 'producer gas plants' it becomes a formidable rival to coal with its ever-fluctuating price – James Smith. 08 04 04a

1908 07 31

Cambridgeshire County Council have purchased a farm at Milton by auction and arranged to hire land at Guilden Morden and Isleham for use as smallholdings. They have also been offered 166 acres at Herod's Farm Foxton for £3,500. Petitions have been received from applicants urging the early acquisition of land in Over and Wicken. CWN 08 07 31

1908 08 28

Smallholdings scheme – CDN 08 08 28

1908 09 04

Robert Sams, (94), tenant farmer at Castle Hedingham, is the most remarkable old man in Essex. His farm is not a large one – the entire estate, including his vine-covered cottage home, does not exceed an acre, but out of it, by the sweat of his brow, the old man gets his daily bread. He sows, he reaps, he threshes, he goes to market, and he defies Time the Reaper. He was a farm labourer for one master for 50 years and on an income of seven shillings a week brought up a family of seven children. CWN 08 09 04 p7

1908 09 18

Butchers had no means of knowing whether meat was from an animal infected with tuberculosis. Now they would insist on a warranty from the farmer who is in a queer fix. If farmers who sell in Cambridge market refuse to give the warranty then local butchers will buy London-killed meat. If they give a warranty they risk having to pay compensation for any meat found to be tuberculous. CWN 08 09 18

1908 09 18

Three financial failures connected with agriculture came before Cambridge bankruptcy court. A Swaffham Prior farmer had borrowed from moneylenders who he hoped to pay off with a good harvest. But even after the best harvest for years he was still in debt. He lived in a large house so his wife had to have a maid because she could not do all the work herself. He'd also spent a great deal on whisky and a fur collar for his wife. CWN 08 09 18 p7

1908 10 09

Provision of smallholdings Hauxton, Cottenham, Steeple Morden & Haslingfield – CWN 08 10 09

1909 02 26

A lecture on farming in Canada, illustrated by a magic lantern, was given in Great Shelford by Mr Swain from Manitoba. Everything was done by machinery and labour was not so laborious as in England. It was only 4 ½ days from England – just like taking a walk. The accommodation in crossing the Atlantic was immense, even the third-class passengers enjoyed all manner of games. They should not confuse Canada with America. They belonged to England and they were loyal (applause) CWN 09 02 26

1909 03 12

The Duke of Bedford's offer of the Thorney estate to the Crown has been declined and he will now put the estate up for auction. The Duke says he is prepared to assist existing tenants to buy their holdings by allowing a portion of the purchase money to remain on mortgage, but the tenants feel they should at least have the option of private treaty before their farms are put up to public competition. Some holdings have been in the occupation of the same families since 1772 and they claim they have done as much in developing the estate as the Bedford family. Should the sale take place it will spell ruin to many, they fear. 09 03 12

1909 06 18

Canada. Britain's nearest overseas dominion. Britain's breadbasket. 160 acres Government land free for farming. Two years rent of an English farm will purchase an improved farm near prosperous settlements. Happy home and contentment. Profitable dairying. For full particulars apply to Superintendent of Canadian Emigration, Charing Cross, London: Advert. 09 06 18

1909 08 06

The Eastern Counties boast the cleanest bill of cattle health in the world, despite the many restrictions. So farmers are interested in the latest Chinese importations: 2,000 tons of frozen pigs together with 1,345 carcases of deer, 8,418 cases of poultry and 20,002 cases of eggs. If this continues it will prejudice the British farmer. True the price of home-cured bacon is increasing but at Haverhill recently there was such a glut of young porkers that a wholesale merchant was able to buy the lot at twopence-halfpenny per lb. 09 08 06

1909 08 27

A small-holder, horny-handed, weather beaten and obviously a hard worker, led the way to his oat field where the shocks of golden grain were awaiting carting. He was one of the pioneering Burwell Small Holdings scheme, a sturdy, independent and cheerful race springing up from the labouring and small tradesmen class thankful for the reform which has given them a share in the soil. Hall Farm, a white-washed homestead ringed by a fruitful orchard typifies country life at its best while eight cottages are now being built each with an acre of ground attached. CWN 09 08 27

1909 10 22

An inquiry into County Council plans to acquire land for smallholdings at Thornhall Farm on the Upware Road, Wicken was told they needed 300 acres of land and this was suitable. They had opened negotiations but the trustees were not willing to let it for more than eight years so they'd decided on compulsory purchase. Since then the land had been leased by Robert Fuller and Henry Bailey for a period of ten years. It was so mixed up with the Spinney Estates that it would be hard to separate it.

– 09 10 22

1909 12 10

Farmers backed Huntingdonshire County Council's refusal to declare the county an infested swine fever area. It would deal very harshly with the small pig breeder whereas it was the large dealers who were the offenders. The recent disease was different from the old swine fever. But the Board of Agriculture may put the order in force themselves and charge the county with the cost. CWN 09 12 10

1910

1910 01 21

An old Bottisham man recalled: "I remember the time, 68 years ago, when I used to go bird scaring. I used to go past the church at four o'clock in the morning, and used to come home at sundown. I have ploughed scores of acres on a bit of bread and onions, and I have seen my poor old father crying while he's been thrashing wheat because he hadn't a bit of bread to eat. We don't want those times to come back again". He concluded: "God bless the Liberals, who gave us old age pensions. Look how I used to live, and how I've lived this year" CWN 10 01 21c & d

1910 02 25

Cottenham communal farming records – 10 02 25k

1910 03 04

The alarming outbreak of fires which occasioned such consternation in Alconbury was added to when a second farm belonging to George Bromhead was set alight. They started on 11th April last year at the farm of William Mitchell; six days later came the most serious when a range of buildings belonging to Mr Bromhead were destroyed. Fears were increased when Mr W.P. Theakston, the agent for a number of farms, received letters threatening further fires. In July there were two at Hartford, in August one at Alconbury and earlier this month one on the farm of Ernest Francis. A man has been arrested 10 03 04d

1910 04 29

The University's new School of Agriculture in Downing Street was opened by the Duke of Devonshire. Designed by Arnold Mitchell it is built of dull red Dutch brick. The floors and staircase are of fireproof construction and the building is heated by hot water and lighted by electricity. It will accommodate 100 students with a lecture room, botanical laboratory, greenhouse and photographic darkroom. 10 04 29 f & g

1910 05 27

Massacre of Rats - During threshing operations at Samson's Barn, Boxworth, there was a great killing of rats, many of which were stated to have been as large as rabbits. Several pitch pole sticks were broken in butchering the gigantic rodents 10 05 27f

1910 06 24

A sad accident occurred at Clay Way farm near Ely when a farmer's son was carting farm produce. He was standing on the shaft of a tumbrel proceeding down a drove which was very uneven when he slipped and fell. The wheel of the cart passed over his chest and as the vehicle contained a load of mangolds – a tremendous weight – he was terribly injured. A pathetic feature of the fatality is that the young man was soon to have been married and great sympathy is felt for his fiancée. 10 06 24f

1910 07 08

On Saturday an Oakington farmer lost a flock of 83 sheep but, like Little Bo-Peep, he left them alone and hoped they would come home. Then on Sunday he hired a motor car and scoured the country visiting Bottisham, Newmarket, Shelford and other places too numerous to mention. At length discouraged and with the petrol tank running low, he turned towards home and when nearing the Five Bells on the Huntingdon Road espied them in front of him. Had the farmer only had the faith of Miss Bo Peep he would have saved himself a long motor ride. 10 07 08g

1910 07 22

Fire broke out at Great Dumpling's Farm, Barton. A cyclist gave the alarm at the Ridley Hall post and a section of the Cambridge brigade under the command of Capt Greef soon had the flames under control. Farming implements including a self-binder, chaff-cutter and elevator were damaged. PC Evans saw two boys running away; he caught one who admitted they'd been playing with matches near some straw on the farm 10 07 22a

1910 10 21

A fire involving the loss of seven stacks occurred at River Farm, Haslingfield which has just been taken over by Messrs Chivers. It was noticed by Mr Hays of Harston who jumped from his trap and tried to tread out the flames before rushing into the village to give the alarm. While some men worked hard to save the stacks, two horse keepers got ten valuable horses from the stables while others removed valuable farm implements. The glow could be seen for many miles round and attracted crowds of people from neighbouring villages. Firemen cycled over from Cambridge and the steamer, which arrived after a fast run, was soon got to work. But for the splendid efforts of the villagers the whole farm would have been destroyed. 10 10 21

1910 11 04

Manor Farm, Haslingfield, is an old family property. As it was convenient for military purposes the house was originally well fortified and a wide full moat still encompasses it on three sides. It was most useful when a stack fire broke out. Huge cloths were flung over the old barn roof and pail after pail emptied over it. The sky was glowing ruddily and hundreds of people were soon on the spot, most of them spectators. But a helpful few assisted to prevent the spread of the flames. It is supposed the stacks were fired intentionally by the same persons responsible for the River Farm fire two weeks ago. 10 11 04g

1910 12 02

Sawston Rat Extermination Association urged the District Council to take measures for the destruction of rats. The Medical Officer said their fleas caused plague and recommended certain poisons should be used. Dead rats should be buried two feet under the ground or, better still, cremated. The council would have to bear expenses if they employed people to exterminate them and they asked farmers and gamekeepers to co-operate in their destruction. 10 12 02i

1911 01 13

In their report on the state of the property market in Cambridgeshire Messrs Rutter and Company say business has been disappointing during 1910. Only a small amount of property has changed hands in Cambridge for investment but with properties for occupation there had been a very fair demand at satisfactory prices. This has been caused by the scarcity of medium-sized available houses to rent. They have had a number of letters from buyers intimating that they intend to wait until the question of taxation has been straightened out. Prices for farms have been well maintained but the present harvest has been a poor one and the market must feel the effect 11 01 13e

1911 01 13

The strike of Norfolk farm labourers, which has been waged since May last, has now ended. Thirty-three men returned to work on the same terms as they had come out, leaving 42 to be dealt with. It is feared the farmers will not take some of them back. The men's union had recommended acceptance of the farmers' terms and decided to withhold further strike pay. They had received thirteen shillings for working six days a week from 6am to 6pm with half an hour for breakfast and two hours rest in the middle of the day. Strike-breakers had been secured from Norwich and Cambridge, hence the protracted nature of the struggle. 11 01 13i

1911 01 20

Ramsey Hollow farm arson – 11 01 20f

1911 06 02

The foundation stone of the first Co-operative Bacon Factory in England was laid close to the railway line at Elsmwell. It has been designed by a Danish architect and the walls of the curing, salting and offal rooms will be covered with cork for greater coolness. There will be a sausage factory and a room where the lard is boiled. Swine fever was a concern: pigs should be slaughtered immediately, the area disinfected and the farmer paid adequate compensation for his loss. 11 06 02f & g

1911 07 28

During a heavy thunderstorm a very vivid flash of lightning set alight to a large barn at Cook's Fen Farm at Hildersham. Rain was falling in torrents at the time, but the flames gained ground rapidly and it quickly became apparent that it would be quite impossible to save it. The barn was destroyed together with the farm implements, some machinery and a number of fowls. Linton Fire Brigade arrived very promptly and prevented the fire spreading to the hay stacks and other buildings which literally surround the barn and the house. Mr G.H. Potter lent horses and carts to bring water from the village after the supply at the farm quickly gave out. 11 07 28k

1911 08 04

A public meeting was called to deal with objections over land that might be used during the forthcoming military manoeuvres. But no farmer or landowner attended. This was not due to apathy but to the methods adopted by the authorities for making the meeting known. No notice was inserted in Cambridge newspapers so the majority of the population remained ignorant. There would be danger of abortions in breeding ewes and any stock should be removed. Civil compensation offices will adjudicate in any dispute. Engineers will report on all roads before and after the manoeuvres and meet local authorities with regard to any damage caused. 11 08 04g

1911 08 11

A serious fire broke out at Bank Farm, Waterbeach Fen when during the threshing operation the drum 'ran hot' and fired the rye passing through the machine. The exceptional dryness of the woodwork and crops made the fire spread with great rapidity and the threshing drum and elevator were destroyed, the engine narrowly escaping. Three or four haystacks were set alight and farm buildings soon caught fire. Men were able to save the house and a workman's cottage, although the blazing buildings ran right up to the walls of the house. But eleven pigs and 50 hens were burnt to death and about a ton of coal was consumed by the flames 11 08 11c

1911 08 18

A farmer from Clare told the court that he had been troubled by fowls and turkeys straying on his land and eating his barley and corn. But whenever he complained to the wife of the owner of one cottage she claimed the birds belonged to a neighbour. The neighbour said the same thing. One morning he saw a turkey in his barley and tried to drive it off, but as it would not go he got his gun and shot at it. The bird fluttered away, winged. But when he called at the Lion Inn for a gingerbeer he was assaulted and knocked to the ground. Neither the landlord nor any of the customers made a move to assist him so he seized a poker and sent for his son. The case aroused much interest. 11 08 18 & a

1911 08 25

The longest drought since 1887 has happily come to an end and heavy rains have reduced the torrid heat. In Cambridge the hottest day was August 9th when the temperature was 95 degrees in the shade. Messrs Pain's records go back 43 years and the only other record of that figure was on 15th August 1876. During violent thunderstorms lightning set fire to farm buildings at Friday Bridge but the brigade was powerless as there was no water due to the prolonged drought. 11 08 25a

1911 09 15

Mr Edwin Saunders had 30 head of cattle on his farm at Nornea. An old cole seed straw stack stood nearly in the centre of the field and the beasts, by rubbing away the sides, had made a mushroom-shaped shelter. When the thunderstorm broke out most of the cattle retreated to the trees but one, a black cow, was huddled against the stack. Lightning struck the stack, firing it and killing the cow

instantaneously. So fierce was the heat that it was impossible to drag it clear of the flames. Huge pieces of burning material were blown a considerable distance, some going right over the roof of the farmhouse. A great number of people flocked to the scene from Stuntney and Ely 11 09 15d

1911 09 15

The want of water is being seriously felt in Swavesey. All the ponds are practically dry and private pumps are running short. Several farmers have had the new water supply laid on to their yards and fields, and have derived great benefit thereby. The public pumps of the old water supply, hitherto only allowed to be drawn upon for domestic purposes, have been used for farm purposes and have allowed many farmers to obtain water for stock which otherwise have to have been fetched from the river. 11 09 15e

1911 12 15

Cottenham ploughing society – 11 12 15

1911 12 22

Farmers are notoriously suspicious of changes but the development of the telephone system will be welcomed. What long journeys it will save and what facilities it offers for transacting business. There is no need for a separate exchange line for each person. If a sufficient number of subscribers living on a country road will agree to use one line they can telephone as much as they like to the people on that exchange for the fixed charge of £3 a year 11 12 22a

1912 04 19

Soham smallholders association annual meeting – 12 04 19g

1912 06 07

During the thunderstorm at Fowlmere Frederick Smith, employed by Mr F.S. Woodcock, farmer, had a narrow escape. He was ploughing on the Bury Road when he and the team seemed enveloped in a sheet of flame. He was rendered unconscious by the shock and when he recovered the horses had travelled some 30 yards or more. One of them seemed paralysed and the sight of one eye is damaged. It has still not regained the use of its limbs and there seems little hope of its recovery. Two other labourers were so dazed by the flash of lightning that they state they never heard any thunder at all – 12 06 07n

1912 08 30

Landbeach smallholdings petition – 12 08 30c

1912 09 20

Bankruptcy – Arthur Clarke, stationer in Trinity Street, Kirtling builder. Lt Downham smallholder -12 09 20a

1912 12 20

Canada, the land of freedom and light taxation. You cannot obtain a more desirable home than in the fertile valleys of New Brunswick. Only six days' sail from England. The ideal country for fruit, dairy and mixed farming, also for hunting and fishing. The rent of an English farm will purchase one outright here. Write to New Brunswick Government Office, Southampton Street, London - Advertisement. 12 12 20

1913 02 14

Longstanton smallholdings

1913 02 21

Landbeach Worts Farm smallholdings inquiry

1913 02 21

The Court heard that an agricultural labourer had been working for F.G. Coy at St John's Farm, Ely, when the steel hawser round the drum of the engine came off. Instead of putting it on with a crowbar, he used his hand, badly cutting it. He'd been awarded 9s a week under the Workmen's Compensation Fund. The hand had healed up and would get stronger with use. The farmer had offered him light work. But the man was in the Oddfellows and in receipt of sick pay for a year. If he took any work he would lose this. He was better off staying at home. The judge decided he could do some work and reduced his compensation payments to five shillings a week. 13 02 21 p11

1913 02 28

Thatch or corrugated iron for farming

1913 03 24

A fierce fire occurred at North Fen Farm, Waterbeach, deep in the fen. The alarm was given by members of the Stretham Fen platelayers' gang who carried bucket after bucket of water from the wide drains. The battle seemed hopeless. The tar on the nearest side of the shed was melted and streamed down the sides. It was burnt out with its contents, including a self-binder, grass mower, horse hoe and three bags of artificial manure. Waterbeach fire brigade got within a mile of the scene but were told the fire had been extinguished and turned back. 13 03 24 p5 CIP

1913 04 04

The new light railway between Elsenham & Thaxted was officially opened. The line runs for 5½ miles with three stopping places, Sibley Station, Henham & Cutler's Green. In 1896 it was proposed that the line should go as far as Bardsfield but in 1906 it was decided to terminate at Thaxted. The GER undertook to find half the cost of construction if the Treasury provided the rest and landowners gave the land.. There can be very limited revenue with the GER carrying farm and market garden produce cheaply and quickly to London.

1913 04 04

The Chamber of Agriculture dinner heard that Arthur Bull had discovered a document showing the agricultural condition of Cottenham before inclosure. The largest farmer had 59 acres in 139 separate pieces scattered all over the parish with no two plots joining. Three quarters of the parish was grass; a farmer sent his cows on to the common in the morning and could then amuse himself all day as long as he was ready to milk it in the evening. The cow did the rest. But it did not produce wool, so people had to keep a flock of sheep, most of which died of rot.

1913 04 04

By the establishment of the University Farm Cambridge University had identified itself with the greatest industry without. It had a very large landed interest and a greater proportion of the land of Cambridgeshire than any single landlord. But Mr A. Gray, the Master of Jesus said few knew academics much about agriculture: undergraduates were examined in the Corn Exchange at the feet of the statue of Jonas Webb without having the remotest idea as to who he was.

1913 04 18

Councillor W.J. Green of Childerley Gate says that the old type of landowner have passed away and the estates bought by commercial men who have allowed many cottages to become dilapidated and untenantable. In this area clays and clunch were used to construct good substantial cottages thatched with straw or reed which are the envy of many town dwellers. But too often the Council do not trouble to see they are kept in good condition which is why many are uninhabitable. Men working for the state and county council are occupying cottages where the farm hands have been turned out, because they can afford to pay more rent. The state should build cottages for their employees 13 04 18 p3

1913 05 02

Pamplin's sue Fen Drayton farmer for ploughing or threshing

1913 05 02

Stacks on a farm at Kennett had been sold before the farmer was made bankrupt and should not be claimed by the Official Receiver, a court heard. It was a custom to allow sold sacks to remain on the farm until it suited the convenience of the purchaser to remove them. Stacks of barley and pea straw had been threshed but not sainfoin or clover. But a farmer scarcely ever sold corn unthreshed in the stack because nobody would tell the exact quantity or quality and one was bound to make a bad bargain. Various estate agents said they had never heard of such a 'custom' but F.F. Doggett, a farmer from Cherry Hinton said it had existed locally for the last 30 years 13 05 02 p9 CIP

1913 06 13

Agricultural Labourers Union branch as result Labour Party

1913 07 02

Ely Chamber of Agriculture first dinner

1913 07 25

Histon Agricultural Labourers trade union meeting

1913 10 10

There was until recently in Wilburton a large increase in the number of rats on the premises of Major Hudson, dealer and farmer. They ate the food that was given to pigs and other animals so it was found imperative to destroy them. John Sadler, rat catcher of Stretham was engaged with dogs and ferrets. The number killed was 104 13 10 10 p11

1913 10 17

The report of the Land Inquiry Committee shows country labourers' wages have decreased since 1907; many of the most energetic are emigrating or moving to towns, depressing the wages of town labourers. There should be a legal minimum wage. The lack of cottages mean young couples are prevented from marrying or live in their parents' overcrowded homes, lowering the standards of comfort. Other labourers are in tied houses and farmers can dictate what men should grow in their garden. Parish Councils should acquire allotments. Many cottages are unfit for human habitation Land report 13 10 17 p5 & 7

1913 11 21

Isle of Ely County Council – smallholdings report including Downham, Haddenham, Littleport, Stretham, Police cottage at Wilburton

1913 12 05

Eglantyne Jebb told a meeting that farming was in a very unsatisfactory state and a great deal of land was now waste. Since 1881 the population had increased by a quarter but the number of agricultural labourers had decreased by more than a quarter. Country children fell victim to diseases due to ill-nourishment caused by the bad condition of cottages and the evil of low pay. Wages were better in areas where there were factories to add competition for workforce 13 12 05 p4

1913 12 05

Two Ickleton boys aged 11 and eight were charged with stealing two plough wheels, one plough stalk and a shoulder from a field. They had tied the wheel to a piece of string and dashed it against a wall before selling the bits to a man for twopence. Their mother asked the court for leniency but magistrate said it was her responsibility to bring up her children. They would be birched. On the sentence the mother and lads burst into tears. But it was no use making a row about it: it would do the boys good. They were removed from the court, howling loudly

1913 12 12

Isleham smallholdings presentation

1914 02 20

About 500 working men attended a parish meeting at Cottenham to discuss allotments. They hoped to acquire Christ College Farm as the college was willing to help the working people. Preference would be given to the young: it was them they wanted to get in the villages and if they were given a piece of land, they would stop at home. If the farm were let out it would maintain three times the people it currently did. It would bring more people back on the land than any other way 14 02 20g

1914 02 20

Sparrow Club. The annual meeting of the Sawston, Whittlesford and Pampisford Sparrow Club was held at the Bull Hotel, Sawston, on Monday. Mr. Gingell was re-elected Hon. Secretary and Treasurer, and Mr. D. L. Huddleston, J.P. President. The total number of sparrows killed during the last year amounted to 2,500. The prize of 10s, for farms over 200 acres was awarded to Mr. Allen for 291 sparrows. The prize of 7s. 6d. for farms of 100 acres was awarded to Mr. Arnell. The prize of 5s. was awarded to Mr. W. Auger, junior, for allotment holders for a total of 400 sparrows. Mr. F. Ward was appointed receiver for Sawston, Mr. Fordham for Pampisford and Mr. Sullen for Whittlesford.

1914 02 27

Helions Bumpstead was all excitement when 17 farmworkers were locked out by their employers because they refused to leave the National Agricultural Workers' Union. It is simply because employers object to trade unionists working for them. The National Executive agreed lock-out pay and further workers enrolled. Now practically every man in the parish is a member. A mass meeting on the green was veritably a Hyde Park demonstration in miniature (less the bands). There were banners and flags and men wore their badges. A torchlight procession followed 14 02 27g

1914 03 27

Mr. G. P. Sennitt. The sad news of the death of Mr. George Perry Sennitt, which was announced to neighbours and friends over a wide area during the weekend, has been received with the deepest regret. It is about eight weeks since Mr. Sennitt's health necessitated confinement to his room, and since then his constitution has gradually yielded. Death ensued at 2.30 a.m. on Saturday, and it cast a gloom over the village of Stretham, with which the deceased gentleman has had a life-long association. As farmer and friend the villagers had learned to love and revere George Sennitt, and the loss to the village, occasioned by his death, will be keenly felt. He was a recognised authority on poultry, butter and eggs, and for many years officiated as judge in this section of the county shows. He was a regular worshipper at the little Baptist Chapel of the village. He inherited the strict Nonconformist principles of his family. 1914 03 27

1914 03 27

Stallion Show. The annual stallion show in connection with Cambs and Isle of Ely Agricultural Society was held in the Mews, Ely, yesterday. Entries were about the same as last year and the gate was a record one. The popular President of the Society (Mr. J. C. Denison-Pender, M.P.) attended and entertained officials to lunch at the Bell Hotel. The show compared very favourably with that last year as regards the quality of the horses. The Challenge Cup for the best stallion in the show was awarded to Messrs. Chivers and Son, of Histon, with "Sreeby Victor," and Mr. W. C. Enson's "Borough Forest Prince" (Saffron Walden) secured the reserve card - 1914 03 27 CIPof

1914 05 29

Death of Well-known Farmer. Mr. James Russell, late of Road Farm, Wendy, passed away suddenly on Thursday last at his residence, St. Swithin, Royston. Mr. Russell was born at Road Farm, Wendy, 80 years ago, the farm having been in the hands of the Russell family since the year 1700, when his grandfather migrated there from Litlington. Owing to age and failing health, Mr. Russell retired seven years ago, and went to live at Royston. He was well-known throughout the country as a rearer of fat stock, and used to show at Birmingham, Islington and other shows throughout the country. The funeral took place at Royston on Monday - 14 05 29

1914 05 29

Barrington Green was in a better condition today than it was 50-years ago. The villagers managed their own affairs and did not want the proposed Charity Commissioners scheme, an inquiry heard. It was entirely the emanation of one or two parish councillors. Many smallholders moved on to own small quantities of land. If a labourer scraped together a few pounds to buy a couple of acres, yet continued in manual labour and lived in a cottage he would have to pay for his stock on the green while others would be allowed to graze freely. -14 05 29g, h

1914 06 04

Suffolk Show. The Suffolk Show, the first of East Anglian farmers' festivals of the year, opened in glorious weather yesterday afternoon. The numbers in previous years was surpassed in every particular and the show will easily create a record in regard to quality. The entries this year were 311 horses, 161 cattle and 201 sheep. There were no swine at the show, all classes having been cancelled by the order of the Board of Agriculture since the show is situated in a swine fever infected area. Last year at Gorleston there were 240 horses, 161 cattle, 145 sheep, 232 pigs, 1,500 implements and 29 dairy competitions. There was a record gate in the morning. – 14 06 04

1914 06 12

Farm labourers employed by Messrs Jennings at Whittlesford were told they must give up the Union or take a week's notice. But they all decided to remain loyal to the Union. The agricultural labourers' union had come to stay and since it started men had had two wage rises and were now earning two shillings a week more. All farm workers should join. It was very well for Jennings to say he can get on without Union labour but he'd be glad to have them back 1914 06 12 p7

1914 07 03

The government had decided to build 120,000 cottages in rural districts to supply the present shortage and they would continue to build to meet the growing demand. Such cottages would be provided with gardens as large as the applicants could cultivate and would be available not only for farm labourers but for town workers as well. Cheap transit would be established so that townsmen could travel a few miles to and from their work at fares they could well afford to pay. The municipalities would still have the duty of housing the working classes in their areas satisfactorily and unless they did not do so they would not receive grants of many millions per annum which Mr Lloyd George was doing to set aside for the relief of local rates. They would be able to purchase land for this and all other public purposes at its fair market value, the price being set by Commissioners. That would bring to any end the extortionate prices which public authorities had been compelled to pay for land in the past.

Speeches were cut short by the rain

1914 07 03

Colne potato grower

1914 07 10

Several striking agricultural labourers at Ashwell were accused of assault and preventing work. They deprived Alfred Hagger of his fork to compel him to abstain from haymaking. He ran through a field of corn for the police but the men followed, swearing and saying they would knock his head in. The constable had to draw his truncheon. He told the court the men had been going about with flags and with so much shouting that labourers had left work. They were mad with excitement and all in drink. 14 07 10

1914 07 10

Eight Ashdon men convicted of disturbances during the agricultural workers' strike refused to pay the fines, saying they preferred prison. The union expressed its willingness to pay the fines but the men refused the offer. 200 strikers from Helions Bumpstead, Sturmer and other places marched to Saffron Walden carrying flags, hayrakes and sticks and singling labour songs to devotional tunes. Several officers were stationed outside the police station to prevent them entering. The invasion caused much excitement 14 07 10

1914 07 17

County Show. The 51st annual show of the Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely Agricultural Society was held at Ely on Tuesday in glorious weather. This year's exhibition will certainly rank among the Society's successes, for not only were the entries well up to the average, but, thanks to the fine weather, the attendance was very satisfactory, whilst the quality of the exhibits was high. The show was held in a paddock just off the Littleport road, kindly placed at the disposal of the Society by Mr T. B. Granger. There was an unusually fine display of implements. So far as the entries were concerned there was a good average in the Shires and Hackneys, some of the classes being very strong. Quite a record was set up in the cattle section, the dairy cattle being an especially fine lot. In one class there were 19 entries, although in some of the others the numbers were not so satisfactory. After an interval of 12 years pigs were re-introduced, but probably owing to the fact not being very widely known, the entries were not so large as might have been expected. If the restrictions permit, the prizes will be continued another year, when it may be confidently anticipated the section will be better supported. The arrangements were admirably carried out, while the judging gave very general satisfaction – 14 07 17

1914 07 24

The farm labourers strike is continuing and in view of the nearness of the harvest steps are being taken to import labour. Mr Webb of Streetly End has charge of recruiting and has been to Cambridge on market days endeavouring to secure 150 men, offering £8 a month plus lodgings. All classes of men are being taken on. At Weston Colville practically all workers reconsidered their decision and accepted the harvest upon the terms offered. But then they were advised by a Union official and again 'downed tools' leaving farmers with only a dozen hands between them. On Wednesday many of the strikers were enjoying a game of cricket 14 07 24

1914 07 31

The first batch of imported labourers left Cambridge when eight men travelled to Walter Price's farm at Rylands, Steeple Bumpstead. The news soon spread and the premises became the centre of demonstration by striking farm labourers. The occupation of a tenement near the estate was resented and the tiles and windows were smashed. The demonstrations continued next day, the strikers booing and shouting outside the gates which were guarded by police 14 07 31

1914 08 07

Local farmers have expressed fears they will not be able to get through their harvest because the Government wants their horses for military purposes. But definite instructions have been given not to take any horses required for harvest. At the same time horses are greatly needed and the public will be doing a great and patriotic service if they will place all they can possibly spare at the disposal of the government by notifying the nearest police station. Major Phillips of the Hussars is in Newmarket purchasing hacks for the Government. Prices offered are as high as £50 for anything special. Army officers and men are similarly engaged in Cambridge

1914 11 13

Shortage of farm labour

1914 11 20

There is urgent need for food and increasing shortage of labour as men enlist. Motor plough needed that is self-propelling and light so can be used for winter and summer ploughing. It is more economical than horse-drawn plough – can do same work at one-third of the cost. Price is within reach of farmer, can average five acres a day which would require five single ploughs each with team of three horses on heavy land – other figures – that's five men compared with one for motor plough; and horses require grooming, housing & feeding. County council should buy one and rent to smaller farmers. They could also be used for haulage and pulling binders on the road. But they cost £350 and would become obsolete in five years. Horses were difficult to get and almost prohibitive in price. Motor plough demonstration at University farm – photo – 15 10 20d

1914 11 27

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1915 07 30

Storm Damage. Considerable damage was done to wheat crops in the (Milton) district particularly at Landbeach, by the hailstorm of Saturday last. A smallholder, whose first year of farming it was had his crop of wheat stripped by the hailstones. 15 07 30 CIP

1915 09 10

War and agriculture – boy labour

1915 10 20

Motor plough demonstration at University farm – photo – 15 10 20d

1916 02 09

Farm railway,—Mr. Fred Hiam, of Raylands, Hills Road, has built a light railway on one of his farms which in these days of shortage of manual and team labour, facilitates the collection and loading of the produce in no small degree. 16 02 09

1916 03 08

Summer Shows. The Cambridgeshire Agricultural Society has no doubt come to a wise decision (says the writer of Town and Country Topics) in abandoning its summer show. The condition of the labour market by next July may be such as to render it very undesirable that there should be even the mild disturbance which the holding of a show might occasion. But we are disposed to question equal wisdom of local horticultural societies abandoning their exhibitions, and especially those which are chiefly supported by cottage gardeners and allotment holders. There was a great demand at the beginning of the war that the land should be made to increase and multiply to a previously unrealised extent the production of foodstuffs, and especially vegetables. We have not heard much of this outcry of late, although, with the threatened stoppage of importations, we should have thought that the need of such cultivation was more urgent today than a year ago. Competition undoubtedly stimulates the amateur gardener to do his best, and we hope that the managers of the various industrial horticultural societies will carefully consider the local situation: and the bearing of their action upon it before deciding not to hold; their shows this year. 16 03 08

1916 06 21

Manure in Milk. A case of considerable public importance came before the Cambridge Justices on Tuesday, when proceedings were taken against a farmer respecting dirty milk. The summons against the defendant alleged that "on the 20th May he did sell ... a certain article of food, to wit, milk . . . which . . . contained dirt, consisting of hairs, vegetable fibres and cow dung to the extent of 0.55 gr. per pint, and was not of the nature, substance and quality demanded." A fine of £5 was imposed.

1916 11 22

G.E.R. Egg Train. In response to the invitation of the Great Eastern Railway Company, representatives of the Board of Trade, Board of Agriculture and members of various agricultural societies, War Agricultural Committees, educational authorities, Co-operative Egg Societies and other organisations in the Eastern Counties assembled at the Cambridge Room, Liverpool Street Station Hotel, on Monday, and met representatives of the company, together with the demonstrators and lecturers who accompanied the G.E.R. Egg and Poultry Demonstration Train during its tour of East

Anglia. The train, which began on October 9 at Mildenhall, concluded on Saturday last at Bishops Stortford. A total of nearly 46,000 persons, of whom by far the great number were adults, visited the train during the tour 16 11 22

1917 01 10

Well Known Farmer and Auctioneer – many will learn with regret of the death of Mr Frederick Grounds of Elwyn House March, a member of an old and respected North Cambs family. Deceased, who passed away at the age of 65 years, had in failing health for some time past. A native of March, Mr. Frederick Grounds was the son of Ambrose Grounds who owned and kept the Griffin Hotel also carried on the business of a brewer. The hotel was sold upon the death of Mr. Ambrose Grounds but his son continued to carry on the brewery until 1900 when it was discontinued. The family chief pursuits of Mr. Ambrose Grounds were those of a farmer and auctioneer and to these Mr Frederick Grounds finally devoted himself. As an auctioneer, Mr. F. Grounds was very successful. He established the March market some 30 years ago and under big control the business considerably increased. In recent years the conduct of the business has devolved upon his eldest son, Mr. F. D. Grounds', who was in partnership with his father. The late Mr Grounds took a keen interest in public affairs and rendered great service to his native place in many capacities.

1917 01 17

"All Wrong" - The proposal that young girls might be trained for milking and feeding cows, that is "turned from, domestic employment on to a farm to work among boys and men without any supervision" is declared by the Cambs. County Education Secretary to be a system "that is all wrong." The opinion is contained in an interesting report which comes before the Cambs. Education Committee today, when the Agricultural Sub-committee will report that they have considered the resolution passed by the Cambs. War Agricultural Committee to put in hand at once a scheme of training for women in milking and other agricultural work, together with a report by the Education Secretary on training girls as milkers.

1917 02 07

Transportation – transport to farmers of agricultural requirements, distribution to various markets and effect on consumers – feature – 17 02 07b

1917 03 14

Motor ploughing demonstration at University Farm – ploughs with motor power directly attached to them; ladies being trained for farm-ganglers; will plough, sow seed and harvest the grain but will take it to market in a train of wagons – 17 03 14c, photo 17 03 14d

1917 04 11

The girl on the motor plough – descriptive letter – 17 04 11d

1917 05 02

Corn Exchange – no business done, farmers practically on strike against Government fixed prices – 17 05 02

1917 05 30

Seven Days Labour. Five Cottenham representatives attended the East Anglian Wesleyan Synod at Wisbech. The recent resolution of the Men's Own at Cottenham was referred to, and after an interesting debate, the following resolution was passed: "This Synod, representing large agricultural areas in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambs, desires to place on record its strong opinion that Sunday labour is no more necessary or beneficial in agriculture than it has proved to be in munitions. It protests on grounds of religious and social economy against the breaking down of the observance of the Lord's Day 17 05 30

1917 10 17

An Excellent Custom. — Mr. and Mrs. Fison kept up the old custom of entertaining the men of Primrose Farm, Little Wilbraham, and the men from the Quy Farm to a splendid harvest supper. Mr. Fison killed one of his lambs, and with Yorkshire pudding, it was enjoyed by all. After supper a most enjoyable evening was spent in Primrose Hall, several of the men rendering songs. The guests expressed their best thanks for the hospitality shown to them by Mr. and Mrs. Fison.

1917 11 07

Allegations against smallholders. A report of the Smallholdings and Allotments Committee, moved for adoption at the quarterly meeting of the Cambs. County Council on Saturday contained a paragraph regarding notices to quit or cautions given to smallholdings were not properly cultivated. Ald. Redfern said it appeared from the report that out of 73 tenants 61 were not satisfactory. He thought it was time they had the assurance that things were not so bad as they looked.—Coun, H. G, Few said they had 400-odd tenants and of that number they had 58 in the Western and 15 in the Eastern Division who were not entirely satisfactory with regard to their cultivation. Nine tenants were to have notice to quit and they occupied 65 acres 3 rods 31 poles out of 10,408 acres. No man could point to any private estate which, in the same piece of land there was as little complaint as that. They must be reasonable in their attitude towards the smallholders who had great difficulties to master. Ald Refern said he had served his purpose in obtaining the information he wanted

1918 05 15

Overtime tractors – advertisement – 18 05 15c

1918 05 29

Women's Land Army demonstration – 200 parade with motor tractor and traction engine; demonstration of hay bailing on Parker's Piece; need for more labour – 18 05 29b, c

1918 10 02

Many farmers selling up Ch 1918 Oct. 2 p3

1918 10 09

Women's Institutes work in Cambridgeshire, various industries – cobbling, hurdle-making, pig keeping; are over 200 National Service girls working on farms in Cambridgeshire – 18 10 09d

1918 11 06

Agricultural labourers wages, proposed 40/- minimum p10

1919 01 15

Cambs Farm Labourers' strike. The farm labourers of Chatteris are out on strike with the object of enforcing their demand of a minimum wage of 45s. per week. The trouble originated in some of employers attempting to lower the wages for the winter months from 42s. to 36s. - and the dissatisfaction occasionally led to a meeting of the union at which a resolution was adopted declaring that unless the farmers were prepared to grant a minimum wage of 45s. for all able-bodied men, the members would cease work. At a subsequent farmers' meeting, it was agreed to pay the following wages: Ordinary labourers £2, single horsekeepers £2 4s., casual labourers for threshing 9s. per-day and root labourers 8s. per day. This was published in the Press, but the workers met and said they did not recognise it as the proper medium of the farmers reply and decided to strike. Most of the Union men are out, and had been very peaceable. There has been no rowdyism, although a fair amount of passive picketing has been going on. 19 01 15

1919 02 26

Serious Floods. Not for many years has the County of. Cambridge been visited by floods of such magnitude or of so serious a nature as those experienced within the last ten days. Thousands of acres are under water, and at Cambridge the water rose at one time to within six inches of the height reached by the memorable flood of 1879. At Ely the river touched a depth beyond any previously attained within the memory of the oldest inhabitants. It is good news to hear that since Sunday the

water has been steadily falling. A serious break in the river bank midway between Waterbeach and Upware last Wednesday resulted in the disastrous flooding of hundreds of acres of low-lying land in the vicinity, the temporary isolation of several farms and cottages and considerable damage to stacks. On Tuesday night ... above the banks at Waterbeach Fen where the break in the river bank occurred, and farmers took prompt steps to remove their stock to safety, but on Wednesday morning a break occurred, and the breach rapidly becoming wider, the water poured through. Farm buildings and cottages were surrounded, and the Inhabitants in some cases were forced to seek shelter in the village. All Wednesday farm workers and other helpers from Waterbeach and district worked up to their knees in water, but the gap widened, and it was found necessary to sink two barges in the breach. Thousands of sandbags were requisitioned and by this means the hole was filled and the inflow of water at this spot checked. Men have been employed night and day in "cragging" along the banks and strengthening the places where any water was found overflowing, this also being done on the Stretham bank of the Old West

1919 03 12

5,000 Acres Under Water. In consequence of three serious breaks in the banks caused by the recent floods, it is estimated that about 5,000 acres of farm land, including some smallholdings, are still under water to a depth of from 2 ft. to 5 ft. in Cambridgeshire. In places the water stretches as far as the eye can see, cottages, farm buildings, stacks and just the top rails of gates showing out of the water. The breaks which occurred in the banks holding back the water resulted in large areas, hitherto regarded as safe from the inroads of flood water, becoming inundated. The damage has been most extensive and in some cases tons of produce, particularly potato crops, have been rendered almost valueless. The places where the banks gave way were (1) at Barway, on the Soham Lode, (2) at Waterbeach Fen, on the river Cant, (3) at Stretham and Thetford Fen, on the Old West River. The worst break was probably at Barway, where the bank apparently gave way from underneath, after being undermined by the water. Huge portions of the bank were torn away by the rush of water and can be seen now dotted about in the floods like little islands. 19 03 12 CIP

1919 04 02

Cambridge industries: what firms have done during the war; how to encourage factories: King & Harper controlled all the mechanical tractors and implements within 15 miles which ploughed 16,000 acres in 1918; first two had been intended for hauling Russian guns but ploughed eight furrows at time; 19 04 02a

1919 04 09

Sale of Middle Whites. Messrs. John Thornton and Co. commenced a two-days' sale at Calcutt's Farm, Histon, on Tuesday afternoon, when about 60 pure-bred Middle White pigs from the celebrated herd of Mr. John Chivers were sold. There was a splendid attendance of buyers from all over the country, and as was expected, much keen bidding for such valuable stock. Mr. Chivers' herd has attained great honours at some of the first-class shows, including the Royal Agricultural Society's show at Manchester in 1916. The first day's sale brought in the fine total of 2,228 guineas. Top individual price was 90 gns. for the gilt, Histon Peeress. 19 04 09 CIP

1919 05 21

Hunts & Isle of Ely Farmers' Supply Association to be wound up – 19 05 21b

1919 06 25

New milk control board; end of freedom for the dairy farmer – opposition – 19 06 25d

1919 07 02

Fruit harvest. The recent rains have quite transformed the outlook as regards both fruit and vegetables at Cottenham. Even raspberries, which were looked on as being hopeless before the rain came, promise a good return. Strawberries also are much improved and with the high prices obtaining, are very remunerative. Much interest is being shown in the Christ's College Farm, which is let out in small tenements of acres and half acres. The scheme, when originated some four years ago, as will be

remembered, met with a great deal of opposition from large landowners, and was generally considered a "white elephant." The success of the scheme, however, has exceeded all expectations, and the results of careful cultivation on the farm are enormous. In fact, the "white elephant" has grown feathers, and is now the "Goose that lays the golden eggs."

1919 07 09

County Agricultural Show. The annual show of the Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely Agricultural Society, which, during the war, has not been held, had a successful revival at Cambridge on Thursday. There was a large attendance of visitors, and compared with the show at Ely in 1914 the gate receipts showed an increase of something like 100 per cent, nearly £500 being taken at the pay boxes. This year a new feature was introduced by the president (the Rev. C. H. Brocklebank) who gave champion prizes of £20 each for the best horse, the best beast, the best sheep, and the best pig in the show. The winners of these prizes were judged one against the other — which was by no means an easy task for the adjudicators — in order to ascertain which was the best animal in the show and for this choice the president, offered ... 20 guineas. This unique competition was open to all England and great interest was manifested 19 07 09 CIP, 19 07 09d

1919 07 16

Farming Outlook -There is no doubt that the recent rainfall which proved such a blessing to market gardeners and fruit growers in Cottenham, has benefited farmers but little. The crops are exceedingly small and farmers are also alarmed by the fact that there is an agitation going on for the control of hay and straw, which, if it succeeds, will reduce their profits to almost nil owing to the high wages. 19 07 16 CIP

1919 08 20

Improving land drainage; Board of Agriculture is about to lose the German prisoner labour used to good effect on agricultural drainage. Was lent to the Board free of cost and cannot be replaced. Work will be carried on by the local drainage authorities with rating powers. They worked in districts where there was no drainage authorities. Worked on Upper Ouse and tributaries, on Anglesey marshes, Blackwater and other Essex rivers. More will have to be done with machinery of Canadian type. River Ouse is badly shoaled and sections between Denver Sluice and Brandon Creek extremely congested. Preliminary had labour well in hand and three dredgers will soon be working. New Ouse Drainage Board will continue work – 19 08 20c

1919 08 27

Littleport agricultural labourers protest at German prisoners of war, threatens serious trouble – 19 08 27d

1919 09 10

Fruit Harvest. There is a heavy crop of plums (at Cottenham) at exceptional prices Rain and sunshine came at the right time and the harvest is an extraordinary one. From one large grower we learn that whereas his gathering last season was only six half bushels, this season it is 100 tons from the same acreage and the price per ton is from £34 to £35. The apple crop promises to be a splendid one both as to quantity and quality. The yield of corn is only moderate. Threshed oats are yielding about 16 sacks per acre, although there are many farms in the district which are only averaging ten sacks. 19 09 10 CIP

1919 12 03

Women's Land Army demobilisation conference at Cambridge; National Association of Land Women set up as successor and to assist in agriculture – 19 12 03b

1919 12 17

Possibilities of tractor in agriculture discussed at Lion Hotel – 19 12 17b

1920

1920 01 26

Clergy call for abolition of tithe rating

1920 02 25

Agricultural Wages. A special meeting of the Agricultural Wages Board, Sir Ailwyn Fellowes presiding, was held on Friday for the purpose of further considering the question of increasing the present wages for agricultural workers. After prolonged discussion it was decided to refer for the consideration of the District Wages Committee, in the first instance, a draft proposal to increase the minimum rate of wages at present in force for all male workers of 21 years of age and over throughout England and Wales to 42s, with a minimum increase of 4s. The effect of this would be, in areas where the minimum is now 36s, 6d., 37s., 37s. 6d., or 38s., to raise it to 42s., and in areas where it is now higher than 38s. to raise it by 4s. in each case. A further meeting of the Board will be held on Friday, 5th March, for the purpose of considering the report from the District Wages Committees.

1920 03 03

Agricultural wages, farmers offer 42/-, workers wanted 50/-

1920 03 10

Royal Show. It is pleasing to notice the enthusiastic manner in which the Mayor (Councillor G. P Hawkins), supported by an active sub-committee of the Borough Council, and other co-opted members are proceeding with the preliminary arrangements for the Cambridge "Royal" show. It has been decided that the Eastern Counties Farmers' Association Ltd., and Messrs. Gautrey and Sons (Cottenham) should supply the grass seed mixtures which it is necessary to sow on about 103 acres of the Trinity College Farm, situate between the line on the London and North Western Railway and Trumpington Road. The Committee desire to acknowledge the generosity of the Master, Fellows and Scholars of Trinity College in providing such an excellent site for the show, and to express their appreciation of the personal efforts of their agents (Messrs. Bidwell and Sons) and the tenants Messrs. Arnold Bros, and Mr. G. Duke to facilitate the work of the sub-committee in sowing the grass seeds, and carrying out the necessary preliminary arrangements to meet the requirements of the Royal Agricultural Society, The Hon. Treasurers report that in response to the first appeal for contributions to the Local Fund, the sum of £900 has been promised.

1920 06 23

Agricultural Show. Owing to the outbreak of foot and mouth disease it has been decided not to hold any classes for cattle, sheep, pigs and goats at the Cambs. and Isle of Ely Agricultural Show at Chatteris on July 4th. The show, however, promises to be an interesting one notwithstanding, and in addition to the shire, hackney and hunter classes, there will be riding, harness, turnouts, and jumping classes, and the butter, cream cheese, and eggs competitions. There is also a record entry of implements. 20 06 23

1920 07 12

Cambridgeshire Agricultural Committee first meeting – a new epoch opening with far-reaching changes

1920 08 16

Littleport Agricultural Workers' Union meeting

1920 08 18

Agricultural Wages. At a meeting of the Agricultural Wages Board held on Thursday the Board considered the objections received to their proposal to increase the minimum rates of wages for male agricultural workers of 21 years of age and over throughout England and Wales, together with the reports on the proposal made by the various District Wages Committees. With certain minor amendments, the proposal was confirmed as an order to come into operation on Monday, the 23rd August. The general effect of the Order is to increase the minimum rates of wages for adult male

workers by 4s. per week throughout the country, with the result that the minimum rates for such workers will be 46s. in 19 of the District Wages Committee areas, and will range in the other 20 areas from 46s. 6d. up to 50s. 6d. in the cases of Northumberland and Durham. The Order is also for proportionate increases in the overtime rates.

1920 08 18

Agricultural Returns. The preliminary agricultural returns show a reduction of 344,000 acres under wheat cultivation this year as compared with 1919, but an increase in barley acreage of 127,000, the highest recorded since 1914. Potatoes are being grown on a largely increased area, the total 544,000 acres, being 70,000 acres greater than last year. The area of sugar beet, about 3,000 acres, is about eight times as large as last year. Hops have risen 4,000 acres. A reduction of 10 per cent is shown in the total number of cattle but cows are still 90,000 more than in 1913, so there is ample breeding stock to replenish the herds of the country. Sheep have been largely reduced, and stand at 13,330,000, the smallest total ever recorded. Pigs have increased, especially in the number of sows, so that the prospects of further increase appear to be good. 20 08 18

1920 10 01

County Agricultural Committee takes over duties of War Agricultural Executive Council, had promised men in trenches would be fixed up with land when war over; the men who were disabled and came out of the army first had been set up on the land according to the quantity they applied for, the men who left later would not get what they wanted

1920 10 28

New sugar beet lifter demonstrated

1921 05 04

County Farmers' Union first dinner – 21 05 04b

1922 02 01

King & Harper demonstration of Fordson tractor pulling farm wagon – photo – 22 02 01b

1922 04 10

Agricultural land problems, p6

1922 05 31

Threshing proprietor fined, p5*

1922 06 22

A party of about sixty fruitgrowers and farmers had a very enjoyable and instructive outing to Croxton Park. Arriving at the fruit farm, the first thing that the growers remarked "What a crop of Monarch plums". It was evident that every variety had a very heavy-crop, even such as Lane's Prince Albert apple and Emneth Early apple, whilst the gage crop hang like grapes on the branches. About 100 acres are under fruit cultivation.

1922 07 06

The great agricultural city on the Trumpington-road (the Royal Show) is in full blast today - in more senses than one. A stiff south-westerly gale had been sweeping over the show ground for the greater part of last night and it continued with unabated strength during the day. The tents and shedding for the most part withstood the gale remarkably well but a dozen of the larger structure were blown down wholly or in part and the Mayor's tent was levelled to the ground. In the latter a man was sleeping but escaped unhurt, although the circumstances gave rise to an erroneous rumour that a man had been killed

1922 09 12

This year's harvest has been delayed by the bad weather, and in many places little has been done. It will be very late in the month before the harvest is complete. The farmers have had to contend with a drought in the early summer and continuous rains since. A heavy crop of potatoes is reported everywhere but correspondents add that the prices "hardly pay for digging". There is an abundance of fruit, especially of plums, but here again the complaint of poor prices comes in.

1922 09 27

Milk producers problems, p3*

Gt Gransden show – position of agriculture, p5*

1922 11 24

The first dairy in this part of the country to obtain a Ministry of Health licence is the Stetchworth Dairies Certified Grade A Dairy Farm, Union Lane, Chesterton, which claims to be the largest private retailer in the Eastern Counties. The herd consists of 12 cows, six of them being pedigree Guernseys. The cows are accommodated in large, airy sheds, without stalls or partitions of any kind. Our representative was shown several bottles of milk which had been bottled for eight days. One of these was opened and the contents found to be only just beginning to "turn"; certified milk will keep perfectly fresh for four or five days

1922 12 21

Littleport agriculturalists Xmas box, p6

1923 01 22

Cambridgeshire County Council passed a resolution that the pay of the Cambs Constabulary should be reduced 5s. a week. Councillor Webb said they had to face grim realities. The present condition of agriculture was far worse than ever before in the memory of man. They would have to make drastic reductions or they would not be able to collect the money they voted away. Councillor Stubbs opposing the motion said the police rendered very valuable services; their life was a very strenuous one and made heavy calls upon their nervous system. In his opinion they were not receiving extraordinary pay for the work they were called upon to do

1923 01 31

Agricultural crisis, p4*

1923 03 17

In spite of the fact that about 20,000 farm labourers in Norfolk formally went on strike last night when employers' notices reducing wages from 6d to 5 1/2d an hour and increasing the working week from 50 to 54 hours expired, there is still hope of a settlement by compromise. The organiser of the National Union of Agricultural Workers says that the men are anxious to avoid strife, but they cannot accept starvation wages. The basis of settlement to be submitted is that the farmers should withdraw the wage reduction if the men will agree to the increased hours. The present plight of farmers and farm labourers throughout the agricultural depression was the subject of a deputation received by Mr Bonar Law at 10 Downing Street. The official report of the meeting is being withheld so as not to prejudice today's negotiations in the Norfolk dispute

1923 03 26

Agricultural crisis, p5

1923 03 27

Agricultural crisis, p5

1923 03 31

A retired Norfolk farmer gives his views upon the agricultural situation in that County. "Unless the spring crops are sown at an early date there will be no harvest for the workers, and if there is no

harvest there will be no straw, with the result that next winter very reduced quantities of stock will be kept on the farms. The farmer realising this, appreciate the fact that should this result occur there will be no necessity for a root crop. This is in no wise a threat it is simply a warning to the workers as to the possible result of their action. The ordinary townsman says that 25s. per week is not enough to live on, but he does not grasp the fact that the worker receives double wages during the harvest, and extra money for piecework and overtime. In addition, he has a cottage at a nominal rent, varying from 3s to nothing a week, which includes a garden. In numerous cases the worker is supplied with milk and butter at cost price. Altogether his prerequisite are worth anything from 8s to 10s per week.

1922 06 22

Ely rural district surveyor reported on the manure heaps in Long Drove, Haddenham. Mr Heffer said it would certainly injure the smallholders and farmers if they were stopped putting their heaps of manure in the droves. Mr Porter said it was causing an obstruction. He did not wish to debar them from getting the manure out but if they were going to allow anyone and everyone to put manure on public highways the council were creating a very dangerous precedent. Mr Kisby said that it would cause hardship for it was possible that many of those men had a big accumulation of manure which could not easily be moved.

1923 04 18

An interesting scheme with wide possibilities is embodied in the establishment of a co-operative dairy school by a committee of Cambridgeshire farmers, which was formally opened on Tuesday afternoon. In co-operation with the farmers, Cambridgeshire education committee have arranged for courses of instruction in cheese making and dairying to be held at the school, which is temporarily in premises on Newmarket Road. The instruction period will extend over four months, and the dairy will then be carried on by the farmers on a commercial basis. During that period the milk is being supplied by the farmers supporting the scheme who will take the cheeses

1923 05 25

"It is the most serious frost I remember for years", said a well-known Cottenham fruitgrower speaking of the frost which prevailed during Wednesday night. Seven degrees of frost were registered in many parts. Agriculturists and fruitgrowers in the county were dismayed to see the ground white with frost, and anxious inspection was made of crops to see what damage had resulted. There is no doubt that havoc has been played amongst many fruit crops, plums in particular seem to have suffered. Indeed, it is feared in some places that the plum crop has been entirely ruined. "Plums as big as horse beans are black as your hat", was the way one grower expressed it

1923 06 26

Mr Reynolds told the Royal Sanitary Institute meeting at Cambridge that there were scores of cowsheds being altered every day, and no dairy should have a door entering into the house; yet there were scores like that, and the farmer's wife did not like the idea of having them closed. They knew full well that there were certain people who could not keep their own houses clean, let alone dairies. The chairman said he was convinced of the fact that the drinking of more milk would do the public health very much good. One of the greatest public needs of the present was that people should drink more milk and drink less tea, which did no good to the children.

1923 07 18 c

The question of the harvest bonus was discussed by the Essex County Farmers Union. The committee recommends the round sum of £4 to be paid to see the harvest in, or alternatively 8d per hour. The number of hours to be worked a day to be eleven, and where it is customary to let the harvest by piecework these figures can be used as a basis.

1923 08 03

Harvest work in the Eastern Counties is menaced by a serious dispute between the National Union of Agriculture Workers and the Farmers Union on the question of the wages bonus. Trouble began in

Norfolk, where the workers refused to accept a reduction of the harvest bonus from £10 to £8 10s. Disaffection extended to Suffolk and Essex, the Suffolk men declining any bonus less than £6 and the Essex side £5 5s. or a rate of 10d an hour

1923 08 09

Position of agriculture, p3

1923 09 13

At Newmarket Board of Guardians the Clerk read a circular letter stating the facilities for emigration and giving the labour needs of the various colonies. Rev. S.F. Cunningham said he often saw young fellows of 19, 20 or 21 years of age standing about idle, with the exception of harvest time and odd jobs. Some of the more energetic boys had emigrated, and they were writing home to say they were doing well. They had repaid their passage money out of their wages. Agriculture at home was not as prosperous as it used to be, and they could very well send out some of their surplus population for the good of themselves and for the good of the empire as well

1923 10 05

The Cambridge Dairyman's Association report says they had many cases of "pirate" traders and "cut" prices. The position today is that the farmers demand a high price for their milk and the public equally unanimous in their demand for cheap milk. It was to the public advantage that they would be buying milk 1d a quart cheaper than last year. Mr Arnold said: "We only want one milk - the best; and we want to cater for the poor as well as for the rich". The best milk was at a prohibitive price for the poor. It was up to them to deliver a pure milk obtainable by the poor at a nominal sum.

1923 11 25 c

A letter was read from March branch of the National Farmers Union on the urgent need for supplementing the existing labour supply for the getting up of the potato crop. He asked if they could close the schools for a fortnight to enable the children to assist in the work. The potato crop was exceptionally late this year and if the work were protracted there would be a risk of serious damage by frost. Councillors thought that they would shut out of schools about 1,000 children for the sake of about 20 who would go to work

1924 02 14

The principal objects of the Milton and District Smallholders' Co-operative are the purchasing of agricultural implements for the use of members, the finding of suitable markets for their produce and generally co-operating to the best of their ability. During the last year sales of milk had realised £4,869 & the earnings of the threshing machine amounted to £423.

1924 04 08

Mr T Garrett told Landbeach and Waterbeach Labour Party that the new Labour government had received a good press to begin with but the difficult times were now coming upon them. When something to do with mining came up in parliament there were always half a hundred miners to put the case of the men. But it was quite otherwise with agriculture. They wanted an agricultural wing 50 strong for the Labour Party. They must never lose sight of their object which was to push up the wages of the agricultural labourer and secure a fair return to the smallholder for his hard toil

1924 05 29

Tithes meeting, p4

1924 06 03

In the list of King's birthday honours Mr Fred Hiam, the well known agriculturist, receives a knighthood. During the war his expert knowledge made him a fitting person to hold the post of Director of Vegetable Supplies and in 1918 he dealt entirely with the whole of the potato crop of Great Britain. That crop was so plentiful that some could be spared for other countries. Sir Frederick was born at Upwell, and when he was two years of age his father removed to Mepal. He then went to

London to sell potatoes there and in a few years grew more than he could sell. He now owns 8,000 acres of land in the Isle of Ely

1924 06 19

Upware smallholders failure – Creek

1924 08 01

The land problem has been one of the pressing anxieties of our country for many a long year, and to it has been added more recently the question of general unemployment. The jubilee presentation made by the employees of Messrs Chivers to the managing director, Mr John Chivers, is consequently of special interest, as being a tribute to one whose energy, enterprise and foresight have done so much for agriculture and manufacture. The firm now farms about 6,000 acres and gives employment to some 3,000 people in the factory and on the land. Where tens were employed, hundreds are now busy and happy and contented workers, many of them enjoying, and many of them qualifying for a stake in the business as co-partners.

1924 09 03

Sugar Beet Ely (& 4th p6)

1924 09 25

Plans for the erection of a wharf to the proposed sugar beet factory on the river near the Queen Adelaide Bridge at Ely were agreed. A second request was to fill up the disused Roswell Pits with the mud that settled out of the water with which the sugar beet would be washed. Instead of useless pits they would one day have some very good garden ground.

1925 01 07

One of the six new sugar beet factories is now in course of erection at Ely. It will be the fourth beet sugar factory in the country with a capacity of 1,200 tons per day. Over 160 men are employed upon the site and the foundations for the factory are ready. When the factory is complete 600 men will be employed. A supply of 10,000 acres of beet on contract for three years is required and 5,000 acres have already been secured

1925 01 16

The third and final distress sale ordered by the Ouse Drainage Board took place. 25 lots including crops, gold watches, bean drill, milk cooler and other articles were offered for sale but they were all withdrawn, as the bids did not go beyond one shilling. The first lot to be offered was a sporting gun. After the crowd had sung "Rule Britannia" a shilling was bid. The lot was withdrawn. The next lot met a similar fate. The crowd then gave a pathetic and heart-stirring rendition of "Shall we gather at the river". After this the proceedings were enlivened by a series of solos played by the happy possessor of a tin trumpet. A silver biscuit barrel was next. Instead of bidding the crowd sang(?) "To be a farmer's boy" and "John Brown's body" followed by "Tipperary". When the auctioneer called for "three cheers" for the Ouse Drainage Board the response was "three boos"

1925 05 15

The Ouse drainage question is still a burning topic in Soham. Two bailiffs visited a farm at Soham fen to demand rates amounting to £29. Apparently the money was not forthcoming for one of the bailiffs went over to a barn and taking down a halter which was hanging just over the top of a mangold cutter said, "I seize this". A tall, well-built young lady of 16 also seized hold of the halter, and a struggle ensued during which she struck her arm against the mangold cutter, bruising it. Another young lady then came on the scene and struck the bailiff on the nose, causing blood to flow. Farmers think the Ouse Drainage Board was forced on them by the Government and that Soham is being asked to pay for works which benefit other towns who were not asked to contribute

1925 06 10

A vision of 300-ton vessels using the river to bring goods into Cambridge from abroad was conjured up by Rotarian Alfred Winship. This could not be done however until Baitsbite and Bottisham Locks had been enlarged and made efficient. His idea was to have a ship canal. Rivers had to be enlarged in any case for drainage purposes. Barges approaching 14 feet wide already used the lodes and farmers were already talking about getting Scotch seed potatoes by river.

1925 07 09

A large portion of the Horseheath Estate, extending over 1,000 acres will be offered for sale by auction. It includes four farms and numerous cottages and small holdings. The most important is Horseheath Park Farm which has been in the occupation of the owner of the estate, Mr T. Wayman Parsons for a number of years. The farm could be readily converted into a capital stud farm, and it is interesting to note that a Derby winner, Plenipotentiary, was trained on the Horseheath Estate.

1925 08 11

A serious fire occurred at Sandon's Farm, Ashdon. It was first noticed in a motor house which contained one lorry and a farm tractor. The Fire Brigade were handicapped by an inadequate supply of water but were able to save several buildings. Had the brigade been called by telephone from Ashdon they could have arrived earlier, but instead a messenger came by road and in consequence much valuable time was lost. This is the largest fire in the district for some years.

1925 08 27

Such good progress has been made since activities first commenced in October last that it is expected that the Ely Beet Sugar Factory will be fully erected and equipped within the next four weeks or so. The whole frontage of the river has been concreted and unloading berths provided for 30 barges. There are farmers situated several miles from a railway station but near the river and the Factory Company are having their own fleet of steel barges which will be towed by tugs propelled by oil engines. Two overhead cranes, worked by electrical power, can be run along the quayside and used to empty the barges.

1925 09 05

In spite of the difficulties caused by the long drought in June and July and the recent heavy rains, the harvest in most districts will be up to the average; one or two even say it will be better. At Cherry Hinton twelve hours incessant downfall on August 4th have delayed the end of the harvest in some cases. Potatoes, mangolds and sugar beet look well on the low land where sown early, but otherwise they were checked by the drought and will prove a light crop. At Cottenham plums are a variable crop and light except in a few orchards where we hear of wonderful crops

1925 09 10

There is to be no change in the wages of agricultural workers over 21 years of age for the next twelve months. The County Wages Committee have decided that labourers are to receive 30s for a 48-hour week as from November 1st, and 30s for a 51-hour week commencing March next year. That is a continuation of the rates now prevailing. The workmen's representative pressed for £2 and a 48-hour week all the year round.

1925 10 10

A crowd of 500 farmers watched with interest a demonstration of sugar beet lifters at the College Farm, Duxford. Altogether there were 10 lifters and as quite a number of growers had not made up their minds as to which lifter they were going to purchase the opportunity of inspecting various machines materially assisted them in making their choice

1925 10 16

The Ely Beet Sugar Factory was officially opened by the Minister of Agriculture. It is about a year since activities in connection with the erection of the factory commenced. Gradually large tracts of arable and pasture land have disappeared beneath the industry of the contractors and today there are well over two acres of buildings on a site of 66 acres. The average number of men employed in

building operations had been nearly 1,000 and the wages bill alone had amounted to £100,000. During the factory campaign now commencing they would employ about 500 men.

1925 11 26

A Soham farmer was summoned for employing a child under the age of 14 years 'in such a manner as to prevent him attending school at Soham'. The school attendance officer saw a number of children working in a field picking potatoes. The farmer said he was most anxious to get his crop in before the frosts and he employed all the men and women he could get. The school had closed for a fortnight on account of the scarcity of labour so he did not think there was any harm in employing children. He was fined 10s.

1925 12 23

The Isle of Ely County Council claimed £37 for arrears of rent of smallholdings at Tower Farm, Lt Downham. The defendant said he had three acres of sugar beet, one acre of mangolds, two acres of brank, a fowl house with about 100 fowls, and agricultural implements. He had advertised to sell his stock but in consequence of bad trade withdrew them. He had a valuable horse for which he had been bid £70 that he had sold for £24.

1926 01 21

Plough horses unfit, p3

1926 01 28

A Haverhill labourer sued his employer under the provision of the Agricultural Wages Regulation Act of 1924 which fixed the wages for East and West Suffolk at 7d an hour. He was offered a reduced wage of 18s per week which he was told he might either take or leave. He did anything that came along including hoeing wheat, making faggots, raising stone, spreading manure and turning over and tying up flax put in the field. He had occupied a cottage owned by his employer but gave it up when it was in bad repair. He could not remember that he had the delirium tremens and that he pulled the tiles off the roof.

1926 02 13

"The town dweller is rapidly becoming the most helpless of living creatures; he drives a tramcar or minds an automatic machine; she buys the family dinner ready made in tin or packet. Country folks are hastening to follow suit, and all the resources of the State have to be called upon in order to resuscitate agriculture and the rural industries," says the Chief Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Agriculture. He pleads that proper instruction in some useful handicraft should run concurrently with the teaching of reading and arithmetic in our elementary schools.

1926 02 17

Milton smallholdings & threshing machine, p3

1926 03 04

Huntingdonshire agricultural protest, p3

1926 03 27

At the County Agricultural Committee Mr Amos said a tremendous amount of damage was done by rats and at the University Farm they had recently killed between 1,000 and 1,500 of them. Mr Taylor said a rat jumped on one of his students and scratched his face. They had killed 5,000 rats since harvest, they are all over the fields. Mr Pearson: "I think everybody who had land should be paid 1d or 2d per rat. Nobody has got the time to catch rats unless they are paid for it."

1926 03 29

Something of the progress of Trade Unionism in Cambridge was indicated at a meeting of the Workers Union at which 150 members participated. Twelve years ago there was hardly any trade unionism in the town, with the exception of the craft unions. Agricultural workers had met with tremendous disappointments. The Wages Board had sent the wages of agricultural labourers up from

12s (60p) a week up to £2. Then had come the scrapping of the Board, wages went down to 25s (£1.25) and the worker was faced with the wreck and ruin of his home. The men had lost faith in trade unions.

1926 04 09

The annual report of the Cambs District Milk Recording Scheme records the total number of herds was 96 and the number of cows 1,168. The maximum yield of milk given by a cow was 16,194 lbs. It was with regret that members heard that Mr A. Macarthur has decided to give up the Hall Farm at Bottisham. He was the first chairman and the owner of one of the finest herds of heavy-milking commercial cattle in the Eastern Counties. The Rev C.H. Brocklebank is leaving Bartlow & Col. W.F. Northman has disposed of his herd to Major S.G. Howard of Kirtling.

1926 04 15

Milton smallholder, p5

1926 07 02

It is not generally realised that human beings can get foot and mouth disease and when the scourge attacks them it is far more serious than when it attacks humans. This announcement was made by the Minister of Agriculture in justifying the recent "carcasses order". "I do not imagine we have found the sole cause of the outbreak, but we have probably found the most important cause. In the last month we have had only six outbreaks; this is the lowest we have had since September", he said.

1926 08 28

Chesterton Guardians' Coal Emergency Officer said the emergency would be on for another month and they should buy another 200 tons for the needs of the district. The villages were still suffering from shortage and farmers had no coal to thrash with. That morning he had three smallholders from Milton begging for coal. He had managed, through the kindness of Mr Warren, to let them have three tons. In future as soon as there was any indication of the likeliness of a strike they should take precautions

1926 09 09

Ely Councillors discussed government regulations requiring every cowkeeper or purveyor of milk to be registered and all who keep cows must have cement floors. It means that the cows kept on fen farms, to employ labour, would have to be sold. A man would not be able to keep his own cow in his own yard or sell his own milk. It appeared a lot of tomfoolery and was helping the foreigner instead of those at home. It was agreed to protest against the order.

1926 09 09

Invention of sugar beet loader, p3

1926 09 15

Considerable interest was taken in agricultural circles in a demonstration of stubble cleaning on the University Farm, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge. It had the dual object of acquainting farmers with the instruments available for such work and of bringing instrument makers in touch with them so they may visualise what improvements are required. Light land was used in the morning and heavy loam in the afternoon and included both tractor and horse work by a variety of instruments, though the exhibition was in the main concerned with tractors.

1926 10 09

Strawberries in October! Such a sight in the front window of Cambridge's in Petty Cury, Cambridge, promoted a CDN representative to ask some questions. They were grown within 15 miles of Cambridge on one of Messrs Chivers' farms and were picked that morning. In the future we may get English strawberries all the year round. Experiments are being carried on all over the country. And the strawberry season is reckoned to close in the middle of July! Life is full of wonders and disappointments!

1926 11 24

A Kedington farmer was summonsed for the recovery of wages due for harvest work. The men knew they were to be paid on acreage but they did not know how much per acre until they had finished. All they had to do was the carting and that took 14 days. The usual amount for a man to take at harvest in the way of carting was 30 to 35 acres but in this case they averaged only 19½ acres for which they were paid £6 17s which was 7s per acre for with 6d extra. If a man was not employed during the whole of the harvest period on harvest work he was only entitled to a portion of the bonus.

1926 12 22

Colonel Archer told Ely council that the congested state of the streets on market days was growing serious because of the large number of buses. Brays Lane had to take a very large share of the traffic because it was a short cut to the Beet Sugar Factory and was dangerous. The Chief Constable said there were three kinds of vehicles: the farmers' carts, the private cars and the motor 'buses. He did not think they could compel the farmer to put his cart some distance from where his horse was. They did not want to drive trade away. The only solution was there must be no parking of private cars other than in places specially allotted to them; the council must decide where these should be. All setting-down and taking up of bus passengers should occur between the junction of Lynn Road and Market Street and the Sun public house.

1926 12 29

The Agricultural Wages Committee met to receive objections to the reduction of the minimum wage of special classes of workers under 18 years of age from 30s to 27s a week for the customary hours for men employed as horsemen, cowmen or shepherds, and limiting the minimum wages of 12s provided for boys under 15 years to boys of 14. The committee could extend the definition of overtime to include work on particular days. This had been done in the case of special workers in glasshouses in Hertfordshire where all work after 12 o'clock on Christmas Day was treated as overtime.

1926 12 31

The Great Ouse River Board heard that a number of stages had been erected on the banks of the Ten Mile River and the Wissey for loading sugar beet. The banks in many cases had been cut. Furthermore in loading the beet on to barges a quantity of earth was allowed to fall into the river. It should be made clear this should not be done without the approval of the Board. Sir Fred Hiam proposed notices be printed so the factories could sent one to each farmer who contracted with them to supply beet.

1927 01 22

A.E. Stubbs, organiser of the Workers' Union gave a family budget from a farm worker's wife. Rent 3s., coal 3s., milk 2s., meat for a family of five 5s.8d., groceries 8s., oil and candles 1s. 4d., bread and flour 5s. 3d., insurance 9d – a total of 29s. One shilling was left to provide clothes, boots, household things that wore out – such as bedding, pots, pans etc.- doctors bills, clubs, papers and finally holidays at the seaside every year. What a disgrace it was that, whilst the land provided a good living for landlords and farmers, the farm workers had to exist on a standard lower than a pauper

1927 01 25

A Lt Downham farmer died after a serious accident at his home. He had been attending to his electric lighting plant and his clothes had caught in the large fly wheel which threw him violently to the floor where he was found unconscious. He had been a great sportsman. Those who attended Pymoor Sports could never fail to be impressed by his inspiration. He was always a "live wire" and offered a field as a playground for youngsters.

1927 02 23

The dedication and formal opening of the new buildings of Soham Grammar School at "Beechurst" took place in the conservatory in the presence of a crowded assembly. The people of Soham were very proud & jealous of their school. They now had the opportunity for providing a secondary school

with a rural curriculum to fit its scholars for a rural career. It showed the value parents attached to the education given in that school as the farmer would keep his son at school just as long as anybody else.

1927 02 26

Lord Bledisloe said there was knowledge emanating from Cambridge University which was of unparalleled benefit to agriculture and was unequalled in any part of the civilised world. This was a district of very good land – when it was not under water – (laughter) – and of good farmers who were on the road to bankruptcy. They were passing through the most critical period the industry had to face since the depressing times of the 1890s, but the knowledgeable farmer could keep his head above water and be proud of doing it.

1927 04 13

The proposed appointment of a woman as county instructress in poultry keeping did not find favour with the County council. It was not a suitable job for a woman to go round to many of the outlying farms and it was questionable whether she would be able to get to the meetings in the villages as well as a man. Ald Jackson said poultry on the farm today were not being taken so much advantage of as was possible and if a woman was appointed it would spoil the whole thing from the start. Women looked after poultry on the farm and it had been argued it was best to have a woman to teach the subject. But he never knew a woman yet who sent for a woman doctor to treat her when she was ill (laughter)

1927 04 21

A farmer of Skippers Hall, West Wickham was successful in a house possession case brought because of arrears of rent. The tenant said the place was in bad repair, the floors were in a bad state and if he had not wired them the windows would have fallen out. The farmer said there was nothing wrong with the house and he had done the repairs. The rent was 2s.6d. a week

1927 07 19

Swavesey railway station was the scene of an accident. A horse and empty cart belonging to Mr Jabez Day, farmer and fruitgrower, was standing near the up-platform when the horse backed the cart into a large pile of baskets of fruit, upsetting the contents, and then fell on the line, dragging the cart with it. A train was rapidly approaching the station & the leading coach struck the horse and cart. The coach was derailed, the cart reduced to fragments of splintered wood and the horse so badly injured that it died in a short time. A breakdown gang from Cambridge soon cleared the down line on which both up and down trains had to travel, piloted by Mr H. Whitehead, the Swavesey stationmaster.

1927 08 06

Mr Lloyd George's tour in the rain of some of the Cambridgeshire smallholdings was evidence of his anxiety to gain first-hand knowledge of the problems faced on the land today. He described as "marvellous" the development of the holding of Mr David Easy, who started with three-quarters of an acre and now has 200 acres and a herd of 30 cows. Tea, taken at Mr Street's farm at Landbeach was "like a family party" and Mr Lloyd George found considerable interest that some of the articles placed before him for consumption were home grown or home made. The tour continued to Cottenham and Willingham.

1927 08 29

The season 1927 is likely to be long remembered by agriculture generally. And those recollections will be anything but pleasant. Nor is the weather entirely responsible. Wheat came up well, but on heavy land we had a bad set in the spring, the land being sodden with wet, and late frost most nights played havoc, from which recovery was impossible. Some fields of spring oats are good but are mostly tangled by adverse weather conditions and difficult to handle. There are some excellent crops of sugar beet but when growers note the profits made by the beet factories and compare it with their own year's accounts one fails to see the justice in the contract price offered – R.L. Fuller, Wicken

1927 09 16

Sugar beet farms, p5

1927 10 08

A fire broke out in the stackyard at Further Farm, Stretham fen and eight were totally destroyed. Considerable difficulty was experienced in getting the fire engine to the farm owing to the condition of the drove, but with the help of three horses from the farm this was accomplished. Mr F. Oakey drove from Ely in his motor and arrived before the firemen. He dashed into the flames and drove out a practically red hot tractor from between the blazing stacks into a place of safety. Luckily a good supply of water was available from the dykes which had been filled by opening the dam at Morton's Farm.

1927 11 07

The County Council considered possible legislation to facilitate the conversion into hard metalled roads of fen droves, green lanes or similar roads which by reason of insufficient hard material were not fit to carry traffic at all seasons of the year, including private roads, occupation roads and roads set aside under Enclosure & Drainage Awards. At present it was nobody's duty to look after such roads and what little work was done to them was largely wasted. If the Government was going to do anything to encourage agriculture it could not do better than to improve these roads.

1928 05 23

A Cottenham farmer said that heavy post-war losses in connection with heavy stallions were the chief cause of his failure. He had started about 30 years ago at Mitchell Fen near Twenty Pence Ferry. During the war his farming operations were successful and he bought four shire stallions. But after the war horses went down slump, the country was flooded with horses from abroad and farmers would not breed horses. So he had his stallions on his hands and sold them; the four together for which he had paid over £350 did not make more than 80 guineas.

1928 07 13

The Henny Farm, near Ely, was offered for sale by auction. Described as 'one of the best farms in the Ely district' it has the advantage of being close to the Ely and Soham railway, adjoining Barway siding. It has an excellent house and homestead, five cottages, main water and a hard road through the farm. It was bought by auction in 1904 for £13,000 and a considerable sum has been spent on improvements. Seven years ago it would have made £20,000 at least. But the opening bid was £5,000 and it failed to reach the reserve price of £9,000 – under £20 an acre.

1928 08 06

A thirty-ton stack on the farm of Mr R. Mailer at Boxworth caused considerably anxiety when it caught fire. It stood in close proximity to a number of others and to the buildings of what is one of the largest farms in the neighbourhood. The whole stack had to be dragged to pieces with steel hawsers and traction engines before the fire could be effectively dealt with. The firemen arrived about 4 am and did not return to Cambridge until 7.35 pm. To add to their discomfort heavy rain began to fall shortly after they arrived and continued throughout the greater part of the day

1928 08 16

Mr J.M. Barr of Wisconsin, an American beekeeper of great repute was the guest at the apiary established at Manor Farm, Lt Shelford. Several patterns of hives were shown, including one of an American type and here Mr Barr, in trying to pick up a bee from the alighting board received a sting. His host, Mr Clay had to apologise for the unfriendly reception accorded to the distinguished foreigner. The company then adjourned to tea in the garden room, a spacious verandah which just accommodated the whole party of 30 people.

1928 09 12

A mass meeting of milk producers is to decide what to do in the present crisis. Cambridge is fortunate in that a number of the local dairymen are also cowkeepers and able to supply a certain amount of milk independent of what they get from the farmers. The farmers are considering setting up milk

depots in Cambridge in the event of no agreement being made with the retail trade, to ensure that milk continues to be delivered. But the Co-operative Society who supply the town with 5,000 gallons a week say the farmers couldn't carry out the distribution – 'it wouldn't be very sweet by the time the customers get it'

1928 12 15

St Catharine's Farm, Coton, has been taken over by the Stetchworth Dairies. Built in 1922 it contains the finest buildings of any farm in the Eastern Counties and it is because of the spacious byres for cows that the Dairies have secured it. It is another asset to their fine chain of model milk producing farms, which includes Ditton Hall Farm, Rectory Farm Milton and Aldham House Farm, Chesterton. At Merton Hall Farm, Madingley Road the cows are milked by electricity.

1928 12 21

The Ouse Drainage Board heard the mud and refuse from Ely Sugar Beet Factory was clogging up the river so that even tugs could not get through even with no boats in tow, except on a channel ploughed day after day. The water was being held up towards Cambridge and there was serious danger of flooding. It was a waste of money to have dredgers in the Ten Mile River getting the mud out when it was being put in faster by the Beet Factory. Thousands of tons of mud were going into the river and it was a scandalous affair. The whole of the river between Ely and Denver Sluice had a thin coating of slime all over it and was the consistency of a mud-pie. It will not be the Ouse Drainage Board much longer if this goes on: it will be the Ouse Drowning Board.

1929 01 30

General regret will be felt at the news of the death of Mr Eliab Pamplin, partner in the well-known firm of agricultural engineers. With his brother, Walter, he followed in the footsteps of his father who was a pioneer in founding the engineering concern and under them it grew to still larger proportions. He farmed extensively and also found time to devote to public service; his knowledge concerning road construction proving of great value to the Highways Committee. He took an active interest in the life of Cherry Hinton and recently made a gift of £100 to the Parish Council to extend the recreation ground.

1929 01 31

A Lancashire farmer who came south during the war and took a farm at Wimbish told the Bankruptcy Court that he should never have done so had it not been for Mr Lloyd George's promises. He'd said this kind of farming in this country should never fall back into the condition that it has done and also promised credit banks which have never been fulfilled. Six out of the last seven seasons had been bad; he had three sons working for him who never had anything for 11 years, not even pocket money. They thought they were entitled to 10s. a week beside their food; "At last they got so disgusted I gave them three guineas each and they bought a Ford car", he said.

1929 02 18

A serious fire in which some valuable implements were destroyed occurred in a large hut at Whitehall Farm, Littleport. The Fire brigade were handicapped as the pipes were frozen and the whole of the structure was completely burnt out, including a 12 hp Alvis motor car, the axle and gear box of a Chevrolet lorry, a cultivator and set of harrows. Prompt action by Ely police & firemen averted a serious fire at the Bell Hotel Ely where a large beam behind a fireplace in one of the upstairs rooms had ignited. It was in a difficult position to get at and there was no alternative but to take the fireplace out.

1929 03 07

Cambridge farmers heard that a telephone has now been installed at Bartlow railway station; they could not understand why they were not installed generally all over the country. Most farmers were on the telephone today and the railway company were losing a lot of business by not having telephones at all stations. Many farmers sent pigs to factories by road because they could not get in touch with the railway to order a truck

1929 03 14

Bennett Ward, farm labourer of Toft said he went to fetch three cows from the field to be milked. He looked up and down the road, opened the gate and two crossed. The third was in the middle of the road when a motor car came along and hit her on the hindquarters, knocking her into the ditch. She weighed about half a ton and was full of milk. The two front lamps and the radiator of the car were damaged and there was a very deep skid mark which tore the road up. The farmer claimed £26 for depreciation of value to the cow, the driver counter-claimed £18 for damage to his car.

1929 04 22

Fen Drayton's tithes, p6*

1929 10 24

Opinion was divided on the wisdom of planting 11 acres of trees at West Wrating. The County Council had purchased the land in 1915 and for ten years it had shown a profit. The value of timber that could be grown was estimated at £3,000 in 50 years time. But some said the land was not fit to plant with trees, it was one mass of filth and in four years not one tree would be alive. Nearby smallholders would be prevented from farming

1929 10 18

The 17 miles of river between Ely and Denver Sluice is in an appalling condition: it literally stinks and is covered with dead fish throughout its length. What was a beautiful river now resembles a sewer. When a barge passes it stirs up the water and the stench is horrible. It is a serious menace to public health for it is the only water supply for the cottages and farms above Littleport Bridge. The pollution is caused by the poisonous effluent discharged from the sugar beet factories. One has no wish to cripple the beet industry but this cannot be allowed to continue.

1929 12 07

Fifteen cows, four horses and a number of fowls were destroyed in a disastrous blaze at Russian Wells Farm, Barkway. The animals were in sheds which were burnt out very quickly owing to the gale which was raging. The farm is occupied by Frank Pigg and the owner is Mr D. Crossman. The fire was discovered by Charles Scripps who immediately informed the horseman; together they tried to get the animals out, but they were driven back by the flames. So he obtained a lift in a motor car to a telephone where he summonsed the Royston Fire Brigade

1930

1930 01 14

Sir – at Wisbech the canal is being bridged over making it impassable to canal barges and steps have been taken to fill it in at certain places. For years this navigation has been a positive disgrace. All new bridges should be designed with ample width and head room. It is vital that all waterways linking the eastern grain-growing area and the great brick-making district at Peterborough with the Midland canal system should be protected. Without them no revival of arable farming can be looked for. If the Nene and Ouse navigations were remodelled and a 14-mile canal cut from Bedford to Fenny Stratford a vast acreage of farm land would be linked to the Midlands. We have 1,100,000 able-bodied employable men working for work instead of the dole – G.C. Henderson.

1930 02 04

Sir – the misfortune which has fallen upon the seven tenants of Cheney Water Farm, Steeple Morden prompts a public appeal on their behalf. The destruction of a large brick barn and adjoining cart shed by the recent gale buried nearly all the carts and implements used on the farm; a number of other implements are badly broken, some beyond repair. About ten tons of chaff has also been damaged. It is urgent to carry out repairs in order that the work on the farm can proceed but the tenants are not in a position to bear the cost themselves. We shall be grateful for donations of any amount – G.T. Garratt, County Councillor, E. O. Fordham Chairman of County Smallholdings Committee. 30 02 04

1930 03 01

History was made on Parker's Piece, Cambridge, when thousands of farmers and farm workers attended a mass demonstration. The meeting was originally intended to bring together workers in East Anglia but interest had become so wide that nearly all the agricultural counties in England were represented. They passed a resolution protesting against the increase in unemployment amongst unless effective steps are at once taken then nothing but calamity faces the industry. Visitors arrived by train, car, motor coach and bicycle, the ordinary parking facilities were quite inadequate and cars were parked around Parker's Piece itself and along Victoria Avenue. More than an hour before the start crowds assembled in front of the platform of motor lorries covered with a Union Jack and fitted with a battery of amplifiers. They whiled away the time listening to the Railway Band and broke into song when they played 'Farmer's Boy'. 30 03 01a-d

1930 04 16

Damage amounting to thousands of pounds was done by an extensive fire at Mr Owen Webb's farm at Streetly Hall, West Wickham. A number of valuable pedigree heifers, calves and pigs lost their lives and a great many farming implements and machinery, together with a motor car, farm carts and a large quantity of grain were destroyed. One of the buildings destroyed was an old thatched barn, one of the largest in the country with solid oak beams which once formed part of a church. The farm foreman was burned on the arms and legs when an oil tank exploded. With his clothing on fire he rushed into the pond at the bottom of the farmyard and extinguished the flames 30 04 16a-c

1930 05 14

Agriculture has been termed 'the hopeless subject which no Government cares to tackle' but it employs more men than other industries, except building. Now Mr G.T. Garratt, the former Labour candidate for Cambridgeshire has written a book drawing on his practical experience on a farm and as a county councillor. He says a million men and their families are tied to a decaying industry, bitterly divided socially and economically and politically impotent with no leaders for the future. Control of the land must be in the hands of the local councils which can provide modern buildings and parcel out lands for farms capable of becoming sound economic units. 30 05 14

1930 08 29

Sugar beet report, p8

1930 09 10

Saffron Walden RDC considered whether to give their roadmen a week's holiday: the County Council had already granted their employees one and they should follow suit. But they would then ask for a fortnight and the time would come when there was not a penny left in the country at all. It would upset the farmers: agriculture was in a very serious position and this was not the time to throw money away. It was agreed on the casting vote of the chairman. 30 09 10b-c

1930 09 22

Miss Brooks, the Cambs County Librarian said some books which were distasteful to certain readers had been mutilated by self-appointed censors in villages. She had difficulties inducing youths to read, bringing to the notice of village craftsmen and farmers the technical book intended for them and exchanging books quickly enough to keep pace with rapid readers. Village halls seldom had any accommodation for a library; this should be made obligatory for any halls built with grants. 30 09 22a

1930 09 22

There are currently very few people out of work in Ramsey but when the potatoes and sugar beet were lifted unemployment would be very, very acute. Labourers are so well paid that farmers cannot afford to employ them when they have only routine work to do. As soon as the harvest is completed they are thrown off wholesale and this is a heavy time for the Guardians until the spring. There is more actual distress amongst these highly paid men than from any other district. 30 09 22b

1930 09 26

In 1924 the Ministry of Agriculture established a packing station at Cottenham as an experiment in the better marketing of fruit on co-operative lines. Growers were charged a flat rate per bushel for the handling of their fruit. Next year they formed an association and took it over. In 1926 and 1927 the apple crop failed completely but in 1928 they reopened the station, purchasing apples from other growers to keep it working economically. But they lost money and when the 1929 crop failed decided to wind up the business. 30 09 26a & b

1930 09 26

A sensation was caused at a meeting of the Cambs Agricultural Wages Committee when all the farmers' representatives left in protest. Workers claimed that the present wages of one pound ten shillings for a 48 hour week was inadequate should be increased by half-a-crown. Fewer men were now being employed so the wages bill would not be higher. But farmers said that for many years they had only been able to pay wages out of capital and that capital was in many cases now exhausted. 30 09 26 c-e

1930 10 06

A big fire involving a large number of farming machines and carts broke out at Charity Farm, Whittlesford and brought many early risers running from their homes to help in the work of rescue. The first thoughts were for nine horses in the stable which was quickly filling with smoke and flames. The horsekeeper had no easy job in extricating the animals; one was particularly wild, and jumped a bar before dashing out and the end horse was nearly burnt before it could be freed. 30 10 06f

1930 10 22

Sir – the proposal to use Hinxton vicarage to house young men who have come into contact with the police prompts the question: 'What are they to do?' You cannot keep them shut up in the Vicarage, there is no ground to employ them on and if they are sent to the farms they will compete with local men. Are they to be allowed to loaf about the village? – Charles Robinson, Hinxton Hall 30 10 22

1931 01 16

Farmers said the agriculture Bills now before Parliament would destroy the whole of the industry, root and branch. It was the biggest piece of Bolshevism ever put before the country. The Land Utilisation Bill would disturb existing owners and set up great state farms and a new privileged class – the urban smallholder. The Government says farmers don't understand their jobs and are going to show them how to farm. The N.F.U. is to write to the Prime Minister, Lloyd George (the autocrat of present-day politics) and Stanley Baldwin. 31 01 16a-c

1931 02 06

Huntingdonshire National Farmers' Union urged a reduction in the wages of agricultural labourers because of the fall in the cost of living and the present state of agriculture. Farmers could not pay a man 30s 6d a week to grow wheat which earned a guinea per quarter. An alternative would be for the Government to bridge the gap between the price they are getting for their produce and what it costs to grow it or to allow the men to work longer hours in summer time. 31 02 06b

1931 02 13

A farmer told the bankruptcy court that he had rented Block Farm, Fordham from the County Council. But the operations were very unsuccessful owing to the water on the land. "When I took the land the County Council man said 'There's not a drop of water on it', but it was a dry time and when it was flooded you couldn't walk across it; you would sink in. I had acres and acres of corn all spoilt. Three or four people at the place before I went there all went wrong". 31 02 13f-g

1931 03 20

Sugar beet action, p14

1931 04 03

Since Ely Sugar Beet factory was built there has been serious and copious discharge of dangerous effluent into the river during the 'campaign'. Organic matter flowing into the river from the lagoons and pits absorbed oxygen from the water and fish suffocated. After the factory had been taken to court matters had improved but there was still serious pollution affecting a nearby fishery and they were fined £200. 31 04 03h

1931 04 03

The National Tithepayers Association protested against what is widely regarded as an unjust tax on agricultural land. Owen Webb said the tithe was a burden impossible for the land to carry. During these difficult times of depression, when farmers were struggling to keep their heads above water in the face of terrible drops in commodity and grain prices it was an inverted food tax on the industry; there was no justification from an economic or religious point of view. 31 04 03c & d

1931 04 10

Sir Frederick Hiam, the great agriculturist and patriot, went to London to look after the parental interests in Stratford Market. Then he started purchasing farms all over the country and now owns 13,000 acres of land, much of it within thirty miles of Ely which he personally farms. A great believer in farm manure, he keeps as many pigs and cattle as he can. He was Director of Vegetable Supplies in the Ministry of Food 1918-21 and was knighted for his services. Now he is to become Sheriff of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire. 31 04 10a

1931 04 24

The Minister of Agriculture told Cambridge farmers that agriculture had been neglected by parliament for the last 50 years. Producers did not get a fair price; fruitgrowers must have an organisation which could approach the big jam manufacturers & offer a fair tonnage when they wanted it at a price agreed in advance. At present manufacturers could order all the jam pulp they wanted from foreign sources. 31 04 24b-d

1931 06 05

Farmers forgot their troubles and flocked to the annual Agricultural Show at Manor Park, Chatteris. Special trains, buses and private cars brought over 6,000 visitors and over 500 cars were parked in an adjoining meadow. In spite of the motor tractor the horse is by no means a back number in farming work and there were 78 entries in the Shire horse classes though Percherons and Suffolks showed an unexpected falling off. 31 06 05j

1931 06 12

Evidence of the serious situation developing in Suffolk and Essex in regard to payment of tithe was forthcoming at a sale of seized goods at Stoke-by-Clare. About 500 tithepayers attended the sale and the auction realised ridiculously low prices: horses went for 10d 6d while binders and lorries only made 2s. The sale was carried on amid incessant bantering and when a certain figure was reached for each article a general cry of 'No more' went up. The total sum realised was £5 11s as against the demand for over £112. 31 06 12 g-h

1931 07 17

The Isle of Ely NFU protested against the decision to fix the 1931 harvest wages at the same rate as last year: the cost of living had fallen, placing workers in a more favourable position but there had been a serious drop in the prices of agricultural products. The Manager at Chatteris station said the goods yard at the station and at Billups' Sidings would be improved following assurances that more traffic would be diverted from road transport to compensate for the outlay. 31 07 17l

1931 07 31

Earlier the wheat, barley and oats promised well but owing to the recent wet weather and lack of sunshine are not now so satisfactory. Potatoes and roots are good, though there is danger of disease. There has been an abundant crop of hay but it is practically unsaleable. It has been about the worst

year farmers have had: crops are unsaleable at anything like the cost of production, "we shall have to live on hope, which will not fatten us", one said. 31 07 31c

1931 08 21

A farmer from Hillrow, Haddenham was summonsed for failing to pay wages in accordance with the Agricultural Wages Regulation Act, 1924. It said 30 shillings should be paid for every 48 hours in winter and 50 in summer, while ninepence should be paid for every hour worked on Saturday in excess of 5 1/2. He was recognised as a good employer, his men had not worked their full hours during the week and were paid overtime for Saturday work to make up the time lost. It was a technical offence and no fine was imposed. 31 08 21d

1931 09 18

A fruit and vegetable canning factory may be established at Sandy on a site purchased by public subscription. British Canners say they are getting applications from all over the country to build factories: are local farmers organised to keep a factory going – it is surprising the amount of fruit and garden produce they get through. 31 09 18h

1931 12 04

A meeting at Bourn demanded immediate steps to repeal the Tithe. There was land that had lain dormant for years because the tithe charge was more than the rateable value. The result was that the tithe owner got nothing, the tithe-payer got nothing, the agricultural labourer got nothing and the country got nothing from taxes. On the basis of production instead of paying 4s.6d. an acre farmers should be paying about ninepence. 31 12 04a

1932 02 11

Mole draining uses a cutting implement which bores a channel beneath the ground and so drains the water away. It is not a new method: in the olden days many good mole drains were cut by eight or ten horses drawing the drainer. Then came the advent of steam and the cable set. Now a demonstration using tractors was held at the University Farm using Garrett, Marshall, Case and a variety of other machines. Even though the ground was frozen they cut through it as if it had been cheese. 32 02 11

1932 02 18

Ely Allotment Association complained of damage caused by 2,500 rats on Bridge Fen that had dug peas out of the ground. They made a special effort with 20 men, ferrets, dogs and guns but only managed to kill 50 of them. The rats were attracted by clumps of sugar beet tops being left but the council refuse dumps were worse than the allotments. At Prickwillow rats came from two to three miles to get to pigs, and they did not know what to do. 32 02 18 & 18a

1932 02 23

The Dry Drayton estate of T.F. Hooley may be converted into a Danish colony where the famous methods of Danish agriculture might be put into progress. There would be a great central demonstration farm with its own agricultural college catering for the produce of 500 acres. The majority of the 32 cottages on the estate will be sold to Danes and the rest made available for English smallholders wishing to learn their methods of farming. 32 02 23b

1932 04 06

Astonishing examples of hardship to farmers were cited at a tithe payers meeting at Willingham. There was an agricultural depression with Norfolk farmers going bankrupt at the rate of one a day. Land worth £25 an acre in 1925 was not worth £5 today, yet the same tithe had to be paid on it. At recent sales of farmers' goods a dozen sheep had been bought for 2s 6d (12p) and a tractor for 2s (10p). It is impossible to get blood out of a stone, but it is possible to smash it – and that was the attitude of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. 32 04 06 a& b

1932 04 27

A tractor caused a blaze on the farm of Mr John Scambler between Conington and Elsworth. Mr Richard Scambler was engaged in baling straw when the tractor back-fired and ignited a twenty-ton hay stack. A strong wind made it impossible to extinguish the flames. The stack was entirely destroyed and the tractor and baler damaged. 32 04 27b

1932 05 11

Governors of Christ's Hospital, a charity body and extensive landowners, were summoned at Saffron Walden for refusing to pay rates in respect of the tithe rent charge on land at Clavering. They were unable to recover tithes due to them from tithe payers and so could not meet the demand. Their endowments had to be put to the use of poor children, not poor landlords. A distress warrant was issued. 32 05 11

1932 06 16

During mole draining on a Bourn farm the operator noticed the mole was pulling very hard and reduced the depth from one foot to ten inches. The land was very stiff, heavy and stony and oil consumption on his Fordson tractor was 30 gallons a day. But another contractor said such a tractor could pull a mole and drain 18 inches deep on such land and should consume only 12 gallons. The price charged was extortionate. 32 06 16a

1932 07 01

Sir. Agricultural workers' wages are down from 46 shillings (£2.30) to 30 shillings (£1.50) and even so many are unable to find employment. The price of farm produce is below the cost of production but still the 'Grasping Parson' expects to receive the same tithe as they did when wheat was making £2.8s a quarter – it is now around £1.4s. They do not care who suffers - poverty-stricken widows have been dragged through the county court. The church is committing suicide by its callous treatment of tithe holders - 'Fair Play'. 32 07 01

1932 07 22

Tobacco-growing in this country has been crushed by absurd laws but pipe and cigarette tobacco could be grown on Cambridgeshire allotments – Shelford alone could produce many tons of cured leaf. It could be a more profitable industry than sugar beet with a factory in Cambridge providing employment. Mr J. Burn-Murdoch will show samples of his home-grown tobacco at Shelford Horticultural Show together with specimens of cigarettes manufactured in England. 32 07 22b

1932 08 05

Cereal growing in Cottenham has reached the lowest ebb in living memory. Many acres of land have become derelict and present a sorry spectacle indeed. It suffered first in May from excessive wet, followed by prolonged drought and then the recent heavy storms. The farmer's expenses will again over-ride receipts. Most fruit growers are disappointed with the crops, though the canners have taken a fair quantity, which has helped. 32 08 05c

1932 09 30

The agricultural wages tribunal heard that the position of the farmer was as bad as it was possible to be, the list of farm sales is appalling and it is impossible to continue to pay the present wages and maintain the correct number of men to farm efficiently. But the proposed wage of £1.3s.6d. (£1.18) would bring workers to a state of semi-starvation. Eventually it was fixed at £1.10s.0d a week (£1.50). 32 09 30aa

1932 11 25

Cottenham tithe, p9*

1932 12 02

Sir – The decision of the Norfolk National Farmers Union to advise members to dismiss all workers other than 'key men' is most unjust, unwise and deplorable. They have failed to get the Agricultural Wages Committee to agree to a reduction of two shillings a week and wreck by starvation the homes

and health of the children of farm workers. Despite receiving millions of pounds in subsidy farmers have reduced wages and increased working hours - W.J. Shingfield. 32 12 02c

1933 01 10

The 1925 Tithe Act was one of the greatest injustices imposed on farmers, fixing the amount they had to pay irrespective of the price of farm produce. Land was being let for four shillings and acre but was subject to three-and-six tithe. The landowner could not keep the house and gates in repair for sixpence an acre, a Tithe payers meeting at Swavesey was told. 33 01 10a & b

1933 01 11

During threshing operations at Rectory Farm, Ickleton, a number of stacks became fired, apparently by a backfire from a tractor that was being used. Ickleton Fire Brigade turned out but the water supply was insufficient to extinguish the blaze. Had the wind been in the other direction the extensive farm buildings must have been threatened. 33 01 11a

1933 01 24

University and Burwell tithe dispute – 33 01 24a

1933 02 06

The London Co-operative Society opened their new creamery in Ditton Lane. Four years ago representatives met Cambridgeshire farmers and now hundreds supplied them with milk. They could have bought it some parts of the country at pence per gallon cheaper than in Cambridge but believed in sourcing as near as possible to London. But some small retailers who found cheap milk available had started price-cutting. 33 02 06 & a

1933 02 09

Lewis Robert Jellis who farmed 600 acres at Leighton was a regular attendant at St Ives market, one of the few farmers who made the journey by horse and trap and derived considerable enjoyment in so doing. He had many interests in his own village but apart from being local Secretary of the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Society, there was little that held his attention outside it. However he was a keen follower of the Fitzwilliam hunt and rarely missed a meet. 33 02 09a

1933 03 30

Houses for farm workers – 33 03 30a

1933 04 22

Burwell farmers appeared in court for not paying the tithe. One said he owned 45 acres of land, it was not in cultivation but he was charged £25 a year. Asked why it was not being farmed, he said he could not pay for labour. "I am in debt at the bank. I would pay if I had the money, but I haven't. This is State slavery". Another said he had bought land in 1921 when prices were high and had been hard hit by the fall in agricultural values. They were told they had to pay. 33 04 22

1933 04 27

A Sutton farmworker claimed that while driving three horses attached to a self-binder machine the traces became entangled. When he was freeing them one of the horses swished its tail across his eye and he lost his sight. The farmer, Harold Read, said the man had been partially blind for some years and had hurt his eye against a hanging lamp in his own house. But he was awarded £19 damages. 33 04 27a

1933 04 28

Eleven farmers from Wimbish appeared in court for non-payment of tithe rent charges. Mr H. Wiseman said that for the last four years he had worked for nothing. A clergyman in Somerset was receiving £600 a year out of the parish, one of the poorest Essex districts. Farmers had suffered heavy losses yet Queen Anne's Bounty had even suggested that they should reduce their workmen to meet the charge. They did not intend to do that. 33 04 28

1933 05 01

Tithepayers' protest, Saffron Walden – 33 05 01 & a

1933 06 12

Cambridgeshire farmers had a reasonably good market for their milk, but in many districts there was a surplus they could not sell. The only way to help was a national milk marketing scheme. The country would be divided into a number of regions that would fix their own price. If a farmer failed to find his own buyer then the Board would take his milk, producers meeting at the Lion Hotel were told. 33 06 12

1933 06 15

The rates of pay for workers employed in the corn harvest should be double the ordinary rates for a working week of 69 hours, with double overtime rates. That worked out at £12 per harvest worker. Boys under 14 should receive fourpence an hour and there should be a four o'clock stop on Saturdays, farmer were told. The prices for bacon, potatoes, lard, rice, currants, flour and bread had all risen and rent charges were at least 100 per cent above pre-war rents. But farmers wanted normal wages, plus bonuses. 33 06 15b

1933 07 03

One of the droves at Tile House Farm, Soham mere is to be made into a hard road, nine feet wide. Councillors inspected a reinforced concrete road made in Huntingdonshire some years ago, which tenants claimed was a success. But it is an experimental project: the sub soil was not the same so it might not stand the wear and tear and they could not claim it would last for ever. 33 07 03 p3

1933 07 17

A tithe 'raid' took place at Cowlinge when three lorries containing 14 men from London swooped down on a field and 20 young bullocks belonging to Frank Clarke of Hundon, were loaded into the vehicles. 14 others strayed away, doing a great deal of damage to an adjoining field of wheat. The distraint order was obtained on behalf of Jesus College for tithes amounting to £114. 33 07 17

1933 07 18

The giro-tiller, an interesting piece of agricultural machinery, was demonstrated at the University Farm. It looks like a large tractor behind which are two sets of blades affixed to revolving drums which break up the land to a depth of 18 inches in clay. They cost several thousand pounds and are intended for contractors who charge thirty shillings an hour for doing the work. 33 07 18

1933 08 09

A state of armed neutrality exists on the title 'battlefield' of Woodlands Farm, Ringshall near Stowmarket. Fascists are camped in the farmyard while a bailiff is in possession of two cornfields on the farm. The owner owes £47 to King's College for tithe and fields of wheat and barley have been seized for which tenders have been invited. Police are on constant duty while the fascists watch the approaching roads for signs of approaching cutting machinery. They have chalked messages on the road which read 'Farmers, Unite Now'. 33 08 09

1933 08 30

Tithe chief faces farmers at Saffron Walden – 33 08 30

1933 09 05

37 farmers committed following tithe protest – 33 09 05

1933 09 07

Suffolk farm wages, p7

1933 09 18

Hardwick tithe protest, p8

1933 11 02

Tithe trial – 33 11 02

1933 11 06

Essex tithe trial ends – 33 11 06

1933 11 06

Rats migration – story of a Cambridgeshire farm – 33 11 06

1933 11 23

A Cambridge man told the bankruptcy court that he had farmed at Rectory Farm Coton after the war, then gone into partnership in a retail milk and dairy business in Ely High Street. In 1927 he purchased part of the dairy business at Cherry Hinton Hall Farm and then bought a coal business in John Street, Cambridge. He did not know anything about the trade and he had competition. The weather was against him: the winter of 1932 was very bad for coal merchants and the summer of 1933 made it a jolly sight worse. 33 11 23

1933 12 04

King's College was criticised over tithe distraint on its farms. At Kersey their agents arrived as dawn was breaking with their lorries and the usual gang of East End 'toughs' armed with cudgels. They raided in their usual style and when the farmer let out a shot a man hit him over the head with a cudgel and practically knocked him out. They took cattle worth twice the value of the tithe but then wrote demanding a cheque for more. 33 12 04

1934 02 17

Eighteen 'Blackshirts' were arrested on farms at Wortham, Suffolk by 50 police who arrived in large double-decker motor buses. The 'Blackshirts' were outside the farm gates and were arrested peacefully without any resistance. They have been at the farm for several days 'guarding' cattle and sheep which were impounded for tithe and a crowd of spectators cheered them as they left. Other Fascists were instructed to withdraw from a farm at Diss where their steel-protected cars have been keeping a watch-out for a van expected to remove animals. 34 02 17, 34 02 20, 34 02 21 trial – 34 02 26

1934 03 16

Rotary plough pic, p5

1934 06 08

St Ives market is only a shadow of its former self due to the depression in agriculture. A good many of the old farmers and dealers have passed away and there are none to take their place. Sales in shops had also dropped since the coming of the motor car as there was a tendency for people to go to large centres. Buses come in from villages but leave again after ten minutes which was no good for trade, the Mayor told a meeting at which forty prominent business men formed a Traders' Association. 34 06 08

1934 06 21

A Sutton farmer told the court he'd supplied 30 tons of Majestic potatoes for shipment to the Argentine, he then got a second order and had included some King Edwards. But the agent they were not suitable for shipping across the Equator and during the voyage twenty-seven bags had to be thrown overboard at Buenos Aires. 34 06 21

1934 06 28

Mr G. Lenton told Huntingdon councillors that when he started work on the farm boys left school at the age of ten, now it was twelve so two years had been lost. Unless boys could work on holidays

during term from 6am to 1pm they would be useless and the farmers would like a free hand during holidays. It was not really work, but play. They earned £2-£3 during harvest time and the parents would be up in arms if this was stopped. If they did not let the boys work they would be drawn off the land and be no good to anyone. 34 06 28

1934 11 02

Branch Cut bridge at Padnal was originally constructed by the South Level Commissioners in 1827 and kept in repair until recently. A little while ago it collapsed and was now barely passable even for foot passengers whereas in the past it had always been maintained for wheeled traffic. It was a great benefit to all engaged in farming in the area between Littleport and Ely and its present condition was a scandal, councillors were told. 34 11 02 & a

1934 12 09

Owen Webb told a meeting of agriculturalists that there was a great future for young men in farming. The industry would require more labour in the future. With our exports declining it would be more necessary to produce more from mother earth in these islands. There would be a tendency to move certain factories into the agricultural areas which would make a lot of employment and bring general prosperity to the countryside. 34 12 09 b & c

1934 12 21

F.C. Salmon, an Essex farmer, told the Licensing Authority he had reduced his team of eight or nine horses to five and wanted two lorries to carry on his haulage contracting on a modern basis. But unless he could show work was not taken away from other hauliers his chance of being licensed for two vehicles was very remote. He was allowed one vehicle, restricted to a radius of ten miles as they had never heard of a horse going 15 miles out and back on a job. But Mr Salmon said he had known a horse do 65 miles in a day. "Was it a racehorse", he was asked? (Laughter). 34 12 21

1935 01 14

Saffron Walden market was the most important in the area, combining cattle and corn and it would ruin the town if it closed. Farmers would be compelled to send their cattle to Cambridge, Bishop's Stortford and Braintree. It had been nearly lost under new Government provisions – an order for closure was actually made, but had since been rescinded. If their M.P. was any good he would move heaven and earth to save it, councillors felt. 35 01 14 & a

1935 03 15

Ely Beet Sugar Factory was charged with pollution of the River Ouse causing the death of thousands of fish in the river below Adelaide Bridge. The Company said pollution had occurred when the factory was not working and may have come from the sewage works. They employed 700 men during each campaign, were a tremendous benefit to farmers and an injunction would mean they had to stop working. The man who owned the fishing rights said there was bad feeling: he had been in shops in Ely where people refused to serve him and a wheel had come off his motor car after he'd left it near the factory 35 03 15, 35 03 15a, 35 03 19, 35 03 27

1935 04 02

The High Court heard evidence on the state of the River Ouse. An expert witness said the river in Ely was grossly polluted with discharge from water closets. Ely Sewage Works were entirely obsolete and useless: the mud downstream was very foul with traces of tar oil coming from the Gas Works and Ouse Catchment Board Depot. But only cooling and condensing water passed into the river from the Sugar Beet Factory. A fisheries expert said the death of fish in 1933 and 1934 was caused by sewage pollution and not the factory. 35 04 02b

1935 04 05

Ely Sugar Beet Factory was cleared by the High Court after large number of fish had died. River conditions were analogous to those of a septic tank. The bed of the Ouse had not been dredged for thirty years and was filled with impurity which was disturbed by the considerable barge traffic. Ely

sewage outfall was of an exceedingly objectionable and dangerous character and there were drains connected with the Gas Works from which noxious matter found it's way into the river. But the only discharge from the factory was condenser water 35 04 05

1935 05 11

Any withdrawal of assistance for the sugar beet industry would be a disaster to farmers. The subsidy was granted to keep the land under the plough and without it hardly one of the county smallholders would pay his rent. It had kept in regular work hundreds of men who would otherwise have been laid off. But the subsidy was given first 11 years ago to establish the new industry and the cost to the State to produce sugar worth 5s was 12s 6d. 35 05 11 & a

1935 06 03

Over 3,000 farmers and workers attended an open-air demonstration at Ely to protest against the abandonment of State assistance to the sugar beet industry. It would mean disaster for agriculture. Without beet the eastern half of England would have fallen into desolation and become another distressed area. The 18 factories had installed machinery which consumed no less than three million tons of coal and coke as well as over one million tons of limestone and no fewer than 65 million bags. The cost of the industry had been worth it to the nation as money would otherwise have been spent on dole and poor relief. 35 06 03 & a

1935 06 13

Huntingdonshire Agricultural Show – 35 06 13

1935 06 22

The well-known dairy farmers J.M. Bull & son of Hills Road have won outright the silver challenge cups for clean milking at the County Show. Their cows are fed entirely on foods that produce the very best vitamin milk which is cooled immediately then bottled and delivered direct to the consumer within a few minutes. Milk produced under such hygienic conditions and from such healthy cows is undoubtedly the best form of food, as well as the cheapest as far as children are concerned. The same scrupulous care is also given to their cream cheese and the quality of their butter and cream is a by-word in Show circles. 35 06 22 & a

1935 07 02

An auction of John Evison's land at Fen Drayton was told that most lots had been sold privately to the Land Settlement Association. The auctioneer was sorry to disappoint people but the application was from a semi-public body concerned with settling families on the land from the depressed areas and deserved special consideration. The remaining lot comprised 56 acres of gravel-bearing land but it failed to reach the reserve price. 35 07 02

1935 09 26

Tithe appeals – 35 09 26

1935 09 28

A new agricultural machine, known as the gyrotiller, has been working on Vicar's Farm, Madingley Road. It stirs up the soil very deeply – as much as two feet if required – and breaks up the hard 'roof' just below the surface. It leaves no 'wheelings' and so it is not necessary to sent a horse to plough into the field to finish up after it. Its action seems ideal and crops yielded by land on which it has been used are extremely good. 35 09 28b

1935 11 09

The licensee of the Wagon and Horses at Cottenham the court that a man planning to establish a branch the 'National Smallholders' Society' in the village had stayed several nights but had not settled the bill. A village dairyman said he'd paid five shillings to join the Society but had heard nothing more and did not receive a book of rules. Altogether 362 people had subscribed. Police saw a poster

headed "National Smallholders' Society" in the window of a house in King Street, Cambridge and arrested the occupant. He was convicted for obtaining money by false pretences 35 11 09

1935 12 18

A short time ago the Land Settlement Association purchased property at Fen Drayton and the work of settling 40 Durham unemployed miners on the land has commenced. At present the first ten are occupying Drayton House and 20 of the 40 cottages are in course of erection. None of the miners have had regular work since the strike of 1926 and some have had no employment at all for five or six years. The men were in rather poor condition and it would take some time for them to become capable of doing a hard day's work on the soil. There is no unemployment in Fen Drayton. The village shows a good spirit and demonstrates not only interest but neighbourliness as well 35 12 18d

1936 01 03

Much anxiety is being caused among farmers by the countless numbers of wood pigeon which are playing havoc with winter food for sheep, young layers of clovers and sainfoins. Thousands migrate from Norway and assist our native birds in their devastation despite scarecrows, stakes and string being used to frighten them off. Sheep farmers find it is impossible to farm under their conditions and appeal to all covert owners and the sporting public to turn out each Thursday and Saturday to shoot these pests. 36 01 03a

1936 03 06

Byelaws that prevented children doing agricultural work for more than four hours a day during school holidays were a hardship for farmers – they could not even employ their own sons to help with the harvest. But one 13-year old boy had worked in the harvest field from eight in the morning to eight at night, six days a week, for a full harvest, and was paid the magnificent sum of twelve shillings. The farmer did not put his own children in the harvest field – would they allow their own children to do that? Councillors agreed to allow children to be employed in light agricultural work, not involving heavy strain, for up to nine hours during the summer holidays. 36 03 06b

1936 04 18

Lord Eltisley has made extensive use of electricity on his estate at Croxton Park for threshing, pumping, grinding pig food, working sack hoists and operating fruit grading, corn cleaning and potato sorting machines. It also drives a sawmill, heats sites with newly-farrowed pigs, warms milk for new-born lambs and drives elevators for stacking straw and hay. Fourteen motors are in frequent use. He is a director of the Beds, Cambs and Hunts Electricity Company amongst several others and while Cambridge MP served on a parliamentary committee on the development of electricity in rural areas. 36 04 18a

1936 05 12

The Seed Testing Station, Huntingdon Road was established as during the Great War farmers had not been getting the best seeds and new regulations had to be worked out. The main work is carried out by a staff of 30 girls. There are sections dealing with cereals, grasses and clover – where a bad weed called dodder has to be separated - together with a vegetable germination room where an ingenious devise automatically plants 200 seeds in a pan. Onion and parsnip seeds are tested periodically – they will keep for two years then go off altogether. 36 05 12

1936 06 08

The Tithe Bill now before Parliament would alter tithe from being a charge on the land to a charge on the person. This meant a man could be distained on his household goods and everything else to pay tithe dues. The burden of tithe should rest on the broad shoulders of the large landowners, but it had now been put on those who had not the shoulders and could not bear it, Cambridgeshire farmers were told. If they owe money fairly and squarely, they are prepared to pay. But they are not going to pay unjust taxes, a meeting resolved 36 06 08 & a

1936 07 07

When Justin Brooke took Clopton Hall, Wickham Brook in 1928 his idea was just to grow fruit on modern lines. To those who had farmed there for generations the idea seemed preposterous and they predicted his speedy ruin. But today in place of the semi-derelict land there are 300 acres of fruit together with 410 acres of permanent grass and 30 of nursery. There is also a large rose growing business. He employs 153 workers and even old men are invaluable: they only have to take a look at a field and can drain it better than any machine 36 07 07 & a

1937 01 12

Albert Stubbs told the Agricultural Wages Board that farmers must pay workers a living wage or they would not get the labour. The minimum should be £2 for a working week of 48 hours. Rates for horse-keepers, cowmen and shepherds should be seven shillings more while women should earn from five to seven pence an hour. He would advise the men to take work on the roads or aerodromes where pay was higher. Young men would cycle 12-15 miles into Cambridge where they could earn more. But farmers had had a monstrous year and could not afford it. 37 01 12 & a

1937 03 10

Sir, the new agricultural land settlement by the Huntingdon Road at Fen Drayton daily becomes less picturesque. It would have been more cheerful for the people who have been transplanted to the area if the cottages had been built in a central position around a village green together with a clubhouse and other amenities. The whole layout, although well-intentioned, smacks of the robot mind of the self-appointed planner of other peoples' lives and there is little wonder that one hears rumours that some of the settlers pine to be back in their old haunts – Rusticus 37 03 10

1937 03 23

The present flood conditions in the fens were raised in the House of Commons. A titanic struggle was going on between man and relentless nature. Children had been unable to go to school for months, housewives were marooned and unable to provide themselves with the necessities of life, crops had been destroyed bringing ruin to farmers and unemployment to farm workers. Half a million acres of the richest soil in the country were in daily peril during the winter. Much of the flooding had been caused to Government cuts in grants for land drainage, Arthur Greenwood declared 37 03 23

1937 04 21

Fenland is alarmed at another rise in the level of the rivers following heavy rain. The water is now 4ft 6in above normal, the washland is again flooded several feet deep. But the absence of rain so far today gives hope that a further disaster may be avoided. Even so the position is serious. Many fenland farmers have been unable to get on their land which is still completely waterlogged and much will have to lie fallow for a year, as it is too late to sow crops. 37 04 21

1937 05 22

A wages tribunal was told that agriculture in the Isle of Ely was totally different from Cambridgeshire; the soil was more productive, the crops were apt to be heavier, the type of agriculture was more profitable. And yet there was a uniformed rate of wages for workers in both areas. Budgets were considered of families from Castle Camps, Swavesey and March where the father of a family of five earned only 35s 6d a week clear; he'd had no Sunday suit or boots for six years 37 05 22 & a

1937 05 31

Glorious sunshine and the tree-shaded beauty of Impington Park should have promised a record number of spectators at the County Agricultural Show. But attendance was well down. The reason was the Empire Air Display at Duxford Aerodrome – this is notoriously a mechanical age! But there was always something to see with cattle, sheep and goats coming under the judges' eye. His Majesty the King gained several prizes for his sheep from the Sandringham estate while both Chivers and Messrs Towgoods of Sawston had many entries in the pig classes. 37 05 31a

1937 06 28

Huntingdonshire Agricultural Committee says that Air Raid precautions would be futile if there was a terrible shortage of food and there was never more than four weeks' supply at any time. Large areas of land have gone out of cultivation and fertility is decreasing as farmers do not maintain agricultural equipment. There has been a continued drift of skilled agricultural workers into urban occupations and this harvest there would be an awful shortage of labour. The farmers must get a fair price for his product. 37 06 28

1937 09 07

Stacks, farm buildings, pigs and calves were destroyed in a fire which broke out at Dovecote Farm in the heart of Somersham Fen. The blaze was caused by self-combustion in a straw stack which had become overheated and, fanned by a strong breeze, made short work of the buildings. People hearing the cries of the trapped pigs and calves could do nothing to save them; the animals were roasted alive. The only properties to escape were the horsekeeper's cottage, a granary and a rather large cart shed. Fortunately a threshing tackle had been removed from the stack yard and the horses were in a field out of danger 37 09 07b

1937 10 15

Linton Village College could help the agricultural industry and help stem the drift from the countryside to the towns. It is intended to serve as a community centre for education, recreation and social life, the Earl of Feversham said at the opening. The teaching of mathematics would have a realistic connection with what went on in the workshop and school garden. It has a workshop equipped with lathes and means of learning about the internal combustion engine (with an eye on the farm tractor) and electricity while girls do cookery, housewifery and laundrywork in the domestic science room. 37 10 15a

1937 11 06

The Agricultural Wages Committee increased the minimum wage for an agricultural worker by half-a-crown to thirty-five shillings (about £97 now) for a 50-hour week in summer (48 in winter). Extra hours will be paid at overtime rates. Horsekeepers, cowmen and shepherds should have more. This was still behind the cost of living which had gone up by leaps and bounds. Farmers said the past season had been bad and they could not begin to think about granting a week's holiday with pay. Most men were earning thirty-eight shillings with piece work, harvest and occasional overtime. The rent of cottages for agricultural workers was still often as low as two-shillings and sixpence a week (£7 now). But Mr A.E. Stubbs said farmers would purchase their labour in the cheapest possible market, in just the same way as they bought their store cattle 37 11 06b & c

1937 11 08

Sir – I have 4,000 acres in Mildenhall parish so derelict that they cannot be farmed and bring ruin to the families who try it. Given one road to join the five cul-de-sacs and a bridge over the River Lark to a similar road in Cambridgeshire, all these families could get their sugar beet to Ely factory. If the counties won't share the cost of a bridge, a mile of Suffolk road would save the bank where it broke and temporarily corked itself one Sunday morning. It was almost a miracle that the fen floods did not culminate in a great and tragic disaster. But the banks and roads remain bones of contention in various stages of deadlock – Rev J. E. Sawbridge, vicar 37 11 08

1937 11 18

Mildenhall fen farmers let land go out of cultivation to avoid tithe – 37 11 18b

1937 12 08

Over 20 fen men appeared in court for non-payment of Swaffham and Bottisham Drainage Board rates. One said it was nearly impossible for him to pay. "For two years we have been absolutely flooded out. We have a little corn remaining but cannot get a threshing machine down there because of the conditions left after the flood. We are next door to bankruptcy". Another said the farm he occupied had been under four feet of water for three months. The Great Ouse Catchment Board had taken over the district and a new pump had been ordered 37 12 08a

1937 12 09

The court heard of a dispute between a Dry Drayton farmer and Elijah Deamer, machinist and steam ploughing contractor of Hardwick. Charles Wilkinson of Madingley said he had been farming 55 years. The custom was for threshers to come round at the beginning of the harvest and do a little. Then they left and worked round. While they were absent the straw was used to thatch the stacks in readiness for the thresher's return. It was not unusual for them to be away two months and some did not thresh until after Christmas. 37 12 09

1938 01 12

Three stacks, a tractor and threshing drum were destroyed at a fire at College Farm, Caxton End, Eltisley. Firemen obtained water from the farm pond, emptying it three times. But after it was used the water drained back along a ditch to the pond again, thus providing a perpetual supply. Then it started to rain and poured all night. Other farm buildings containing carts and a number of other implements, together with wheat, hay and linseed stacks were saved. Four years ago the farmhouse was burnt down 38 01 12a

1938 02 28

Sir Frederick Hiam, a former High Sheriff, died at his residence, Grange Road. He was best-known as an agriculturalist, acquiring many farmers in the Eastern Counties after 1910. He was Director of Vegetable Supplies in the Ministry of Food 1918-21 and toured the Colonies, being knighted for his services. He took a great interest in skating, winning the 220 yards word championship in 1895 in record time and was president of Cambridge Town Football Club. He was a member of the Ouse Drainage Board and chairman of three Drainage Commissioners. His funeral will take place at Ely, where Lady Hiam was laid to rest three weeks ago. 38 02 28

1938 03 15

Abington Land Settlement Men in dispute – 38 03 15

1938 03 21

Abington Land Settlement Tenants return to work after dispute – 38 03 21c

1938 03 21

Agriculture was in decline: more than three million acres had gone out of arable cultivation within the last 40 years and there were 250,000 fewer men on the land than at the end of the last century. Since the war a large number of farmers had bought their own farms. A lot of them had to borrow money to pay for it. They borrowed up to two-thirds on mortgage and now the land was often not worth the mortgage. Agricultural land should be bought by the community and put in proper order, Labour Party delegates meeting in Cambridge were told. 38 03 21e

1938 03 31

Orwell stack fire caused by threshing machine proprietor – 38 03 31

1938 05 26

Cawdle Fen Drainage Commissioners were sued by a farmer whose land was flooded in 1936 and 1937 when water flowed across the railway line. The sluice gates in the lock had been worn out for tears and water leaked back into the fen. The drains were grown up and had not been 'muddled out' for some time. The gauge on the pumping station was out of place because the fen had sunk. In Lt Thetford they had stopped the old paddle wheel and installed two efficient pumps and it was not possible to drain Cawdle Fen without pumping. But the Commissioners said the system could not be expected to cope with abnormally high flood conditions 38 05 26 & a

1938 05 25

Land Settlement dispute Abington - 38 05 25

1938 06 02

Great Abington Land Settlement Association unrest – 38 06 01

Gt Abington Land Settlement scheme – 38 06 01a

1938 07 19

Concrete roads to be made on Isle smallholdings – 38 07 19

1938 07 23

A farmer claimed his land at Wissington, near Stoke Ferry, had become waterlogged and flooded as the pumping machinery was quite inadequate and broke down frequently. An engineer said the engine was of an old type and the boilers were not strong enough to drive the pump properly. But the Ouse Catchment Board said they'd got a new drainage plant since it broke down in June 1938. Any problem was due to excessive rainfall and seepage from the river Wissey. Although some celery had rotted there was no damage to wheat. 38 07 23g

1938 07 25

There were many hundreds of acres of sugar beet in the Aldreth area and the condition of the Causeway made a three-horse job out of a one-horse job, County councillors heard. This winter they were likely to have a big increase in unemployment and the Ministry of Transport might give a good grant to improve it. But Government had already contributed to the Twentypence Road. It would cost about £30,000 including the bridge. If the land was a valuable as claimed why did the farmers not supply a road for themselves, as smallholders at Soham had done? 38 07 25

1938 08 08

Hundreds of acres of barley ripe for the reaper were devastated by a disastrous storm which raged over Gt Wilbraham. Hailstones as large as lump sugar left a trail of destruction; beet was stripped of its greenery as if by a plague of locusts, hedges cut by the sharp ice and barriers of ice, like miniature mountain ranges rose to a high of four feet. "It would have killed a man if he had been out in it", an old farm worker said. 38 08 08a & b

1938 08 13

The harvest is in full swing; the dry summer means gain to the heavy land and fenland farmers but a loss to the light lands with corn yield and quality far superior to last year. Against this must be set off the partial failure of the hay, sugar beet, roots and other green crops required to feed the cattle and stock during the coming autumn and winter. At Burwell there is a total failure of fruit owing to severe frosts, Ickleton report a poor year for roots – the soil is much too dry, Oakington wheat looks well but sprouts and cabbage are very poor at Steeple Morden. - 38 08 13

1938 10 19

The tenant of Alderbooke Farm claimed damages from Cawdle Fen Commissioners over flooding. Their pumps were insufficient and inefficient, their lock gates were excessively leaky and their dyke walls were not high enough. The judge agreed. The Commissioners had a duty to inspect, maintain and care for all their drains and drainage works and keep them in good condition. They did not have a sufficiently powerful pump nor spend enough on rebuilding banks. But the Act merely authorised them to do the work, it did not direct them to do so. The claim was dismissed 38 10 19b

1938 12 17

Steeple Morden parish council protested against the proposed acquisition of 500 acres of good agricultural land by the Air Ministry for use as an emergency landing ground. The site was extremely valuable & would mean 20 people would be put out of work. Nearby was a farm which only employed one man, it was practically derelict. Two miles away was land of thin chalk soil that the owner would be pleased to get rid of; it would make a highly suitable landing ground. 38 12 17

1939 01 09

A mass meeting of farmers held in Cambridge Corn Exchange expressed alarm at the catastrophic fall in the price of certain agricultural produce and called for guaranteed prices. In 1938 they'd increased their production of barley by 60,000 acres but received the same amount as the previous year. The consumer demands cheap food, but this should not be at the expense of the farm worker; acres were going out of cultivation and farmers were getting harder and harder up. The farmer was traditionally Conservative and in the old days the party was drawn largely from the land. But now it was made up of industrialists and financiers. 39 01 09 & a

1939 02 11

In March 1937 flood waters breached Soham Lode, causing thousands of pounds worth of damage. This year the same bank gave way to the enormous pressure of flood water, bringing a further trail of havoc. Natural seepage and pumps have cleared this away but at Swaffham Prior Fen about 1,000 acres are under water caused through seepage from the banks of the Lodes. Pumps have been going day and night but still farms are isolated and cattle have had to be moved. Distress warrants are being issued for drainage rates but farmers won't pay because they haven't any money 39 02 11

1939 06 24

The Air Ministry's proposal to purchase land at Winfold Farm, Waterbeach, thereby displacing 20 tenants, seven of whom lived on the farm with their families, was criticised by councillors. The land had been brought to a high state of cultivation by tenants since they took their holdings as ex-servicemen in 1920. They would have the utmost difficulty finding a farm as good. The Ministry were dealing with the defences of this country but there must be other land they could use. 39 06 24

1939 07 08

Women farm workers' wages – 39 07 08a

1939 07 13

F.S. Fuller of Field Farm, Upware invents machine for hoeing sugar beet, attached to front of Austin Seven – 39 07 13b

1939 07 24

Waterbeach aerodrome site of smallholdings, 20 tenants, two had lost legs in war – 39 07 24 & a

1939 09 08

The War Agricultural Committee is taking steps to get at least 10,000 additional acres under the plough. They have wide power but they hope farmers will voluntarily get the land broken up and sown to wheat this autumn. But there are grave difficulties especially in connection with labour and machinery. 39 09 08

1939 09 20

During the Great War food was in short supply and Motor Agents were told to buy up mechanical implements. They managed to get some tractors and others arrived from America. Ladies, college tutors and errand boys came forward to drive and groups of engineers formed to attend them. At first they ploughed both day and night though farmers complained they turned up the sub-soil, making the land unusable. Now, once more at war, we must grow more food, Rotarians were told. 39 09 20e

1939 10 03

City girls on the farm – photo – 39 10 03b

1939 10 05

Dressmaker, hairdresser, dancing expert, officer clerk, shop assistant and television worker. All these are working side by side potato picking, milking cows, muck spreading and clearing out pigsties at the Cambridge University Farm on Huntingdon Road. The girls are members of the Women's Land Army undergoing a month's training before being sent to work for farmers. The majority are in their late

teens and early twenties but some are older. One has her two grown-up daughters with her; her son and his brother are doing their bit in the Tank Corps in France. 39 10 05

1939 10 13

The Isle of Ely Surveyor said there was no need to sack roadmen as the work was vital and a number were digging trenches at schools. He was disappointed not more had gone to work on farms where they would earn more money. But they could not force them unless they first sacked them. Then when they came to the Labour Exchange they could send them. Any farmer needing labour should contact him for a list of volunteers available. 39 10 13d

1939 10 14

Farm workers pay was raised by 2/- week. This was not a living wage but in the last war fathers and mothers brought up families of 10 and 12 children, all well and working, on a farm worker's wage. At Warboys a man and his wife, both over 80, were living in a tumbled-down cottage. He had brought up 19 children on an agricultural wage and every one of them was alive and well. But just because they had a certain measure of happiness, this did not mean they'd had a very good life 39 10 14a

1939 11 02

Work on dwellings for the re-housing of people living in condemned properties has been suspended owing to the shortage of timber. A number of houses, if left half-build would be ruined, councillors heard. Ninety percent of the timber contracts from the Baltic had been cancelled or sunk in process of delivery. They could not get wood to finish urgently-needed houses for farm workers - but a farmer was allowed to use wood to erect buildings for agricultural purposes. There is no shortage of bricks 39 11 02b

1940

1940 01 11

The condition of Dykemoor Drove at Doddington makes it impossible for smallholders to move their produce, meaning tons of sugar beet are lying perishing. Many farmers have horses or tractors and still cannot get down it. The drove is part of the common land and the Isle of Ely County Council can repair it and levy a rate on the commoners. If not, the Rector of Doddington can claim compensation for the loss of crops. The cheapest way out would be the erection of a light railway 40 01 11a

1940 01 16

A Hardwick steam ploughing contractor sued his brother-in-law over the cultivation of land at Caxton. He had been asked to do all the steam-ploughing and cultivating on the land and to buy certain seeds when he went about farms. It was cheaper to plough by steam than by horses. He had sent in a bill but it had not been paid after two years. But steam tackle owners frequently had to wait two, three or four years for their money. The judge commented that if the parties had been sensible this ridiculous case would never have come to court. - 40 01 16a, b

1940 01 27

The War Agricultural Committee was concerned that valuable land in the fens which is two or three miles down an impossible road is lying derelict. Much is well-drained and would produce very good crops but is impossible of access at present. Internal Drainage Commissioners should construct roads good enough for individual fens so the produce can be got away. Coun Jeeps said that in Willingham there were 1,700 acres derelict because of the condition and nature of the roads. Improvements would increase the value of the land in Burwell Fen from £4 to £40 40 01 27c

1940 03 04

Sugar beet growers urged not to sign contracts - 40 03 04a

1940 03 06

Huntingdonshire would receive another 4,400 evacuees if London was raided and they would be sent down within 36 hours whether accommodation was ready for them or not. It was a great injustice to farm labourers that they should have to put up with these women and children. One lady had said she would sooner go to prison than take any more. This good woman had three women with children billeted on her. The first had six and left taking several things, the second departed owing money and the third should have paid 15 shillings board but went home owing over £5. – 40 03 06a

1940 03 15

Sacrifice for Finland. There can be few people who have made a greater sacrifice in this country for Finland's cause than Mr. R. E. Way, M.A., of Brinkley. Mr. Way has three farms at Burrough Green, Cambridgeshire, and keeps a number of thoroughbred mares at his Hall Stud there, and only recently he purchased a stallion named The Hour. Mr. Way was a familiar figure in the hunting field with the Newmarket and Thurlow Hounds, and his love for horses of all kinds is only equalled by his love for dogs; his large Irish wolfhound was usually to be seen with him when he was walking or riding round his land. Three years ago Mr Way started the Burgh herd of Aberdeen Angus cattle, which this year won several prizes at the agricultural shows. Keenly interested in all matters concerning the countryside, Mr Way was a member of the Newmarket Rural District Council and of various societies. Yet he willingly left all at a few hours' notice to go and join the British contingent of the International Volunteer Force which he regarded as a crusade. Previously he had been rejected for the British Army. Mr Way's employees have been watching the recent moves in the Finnish-Russian war with special interest and they are all hoping that the conclusion of hostilities will result in Mr Way's early return

1940 03 23

The problem dealing with soft roads in the fens to make highly productive agricultural land more accessible was again raised in the House of Commons. Many thousand acres are dependent for their crops for this season on decisions made now. But nearly the whole of the Isle of Ely was under the plough and the reason that more could not be done was that there was no grassland left to plough 40 03 23s

1940 04 02

Farm workers are to receive a minimum pay rise to 42 shillings a week, a rise of five shillings, for a working week of 48 hours, 50 in summer. Wages of horsekeepers, cowmen and shepherds will also increase. Advertisements had appeared for a horse keeper at Chatteris for 44 shillings a week with garden and part coal found yet men working on aerodromes were getting 60 shillings. They would not get Irish labour and while they were grateful to the women who had come forward, they could not do what a skilled worker could. The rise was opposed by farmers who would go bankrupt as a result. 40 04 02a

1940 04 23

Arrington farmers dispute results in one drilling wheat on land the other had prepared for Brussels sprouts – 40 04 23

1940 05 09

Fordson Tractors advertisement features WWI U-Boats- 40 05 09a

1940 06 26

Farm workers threaten to strike if conscientious objectors sent to work with them – 40 06 26a

1940 06 28

Children for farm work. At a meeting of the Hunts. Education Committee on Wednesday, the Agricultural (Education) Subcommittee reported that they had under consideration the serious difficulty caused by the shortage of agricultural labour in certain areas in the county, and they were of opinion that the practice followed in the last war by which boys and girls over 12 years were released from school attendance at harvest periods without closing the schools should be followed.

It was, however, understood that such leave of absence, if granted, would have to be subject to the observance of such conditions as would safeguard the health and well-being of the children. Various members voiced their opinions, and it was agreed to release the schoolchildren for such purposes, provided the parents gave their consent.

1940 07 03

Burwell farmer failed to plough five fields – 40 07 03b

1940 07 19

Leys boys on the land. Boys from the Leys School, Cambridge have formed themselves into teams working under the supervision of their own masters for seasonal work on the land. They have recently been engaged on sugar beet hoeing. The July number of the 'Sugar Beet Review' has two pictures of them, taken on Mr. R. B. Taylor's farm, Ashley, near Newmarket, where the boys put in several days' work. About 50 boys were engaged on each occasion, with four or five masters, and they made an excellent job of about five acres per visit. Mr. Taylor — who has a 150-acre contract with the Bury St. Edmunds factory — first demonstrated how the work should be done, and then left supervision entirely to the schoolmasters. It speaks well both for the boys and their masters, that, with their help, more than 100 acres were singled. 40 07 19

1940 07 26

Visit to University Farm. At the invitation of Mr. W. S. Mansfield members of the Cambs. War Agricultural Committee, with parish representatives paid a visit on Tuesday evening to the University Farm, Cambridge. After the party had been entertained to tea, the chairman of the committee (Ald. W. C. Jackson), Mr. Mansfield and the executive officer (Mr; J. A. MacMillan) spoke briefly of the importance of the work in hand and indicated to the parish representatives the programme which they might be expected to carry out in the coming year. It was emphasised that probably more regard will have to be paid to the growing of special food crops — crops which will prove of the greatest value from the national point of view. Later in the evening, the party were shown over parts of the farm and saw the work being done there in ploughing up grass land for the cultivation of animal crop's

1940 08 09

More Farmers' Boys. - A party of 32 lads from the Central School Melbourne Place, Cambridge, arrived in the village (Melbourn) last Saturday, and on Monday commenced farm and orchard work where required. The lads are accompanied by the Headmaster, Mr. J. D. Livingstone, and take the place of the 30 lads from the Coleridge School, who returned home on Saturday after a fortnight's work in the orchards. After a fortnight in the village, the Central lads will leave, and their place will be taken by another party. The boys sleep in the infants' room of the Council School, and have their meals in the Church Room.

1940 11 01

Nazis Surrender to Woman. When a Junkers 88 bomber was shot down: at Stuntney, near Ely, on Wednesday afternoon, two occupants, aged about 18 to 20, threw down their revolvers and gave themselves up to a woman, who was the first person on the scene. The two other members of the crew, who had baled out by parachute, were captured in Soham Fen and taken to Newmarket. The machine had been badly damaged by R.A.F. fighters and was finished off by another fighter. The Nazi pilot crashed on Mr. Owen Ambrose's farm at Quanea Fen. Later, Mr. Ambrose told a reporter "The plane touched down in a ploughed field, jumped a ditch and came to rest in a beet field. The first person on the scene was Mrs. Ashman, who lives at the farm. As she approached the two men, they emptied their revolvers and threw them away. Other men from the farm came up and the Germans were driven away in a lorry by Mr. Brooks." The two who baled out were uninjured

1940 11 21

Bombs on Land Settlement Estate blow in doors – 40 11 21b

1941 02 21

Last local wearer. A correspondent (writes Watchman) states that some time ago a few interested Cambridgeshire antiquaries tried to discover who was the last farm hand in the country to wear the smock front seriously. He says "seriously" because one often sees it worn nowadays in fancy dress parades. The investigators came to the conclusion that the smock was last worn by an old shepherd at Little Abington, near Linton, somewhere about the year 1892. My correspondent goes on to say the smocks were worn on Sundays as a sort of best dress, long after it was customary to wear them as a working dress, and that a clean smock, corded breeches, worsted stockings, a beaver or other make of top hat and greased lace-up boots formed the approved rural costume for Sabbath and holiday wear. A little more than half a century — in some parts of Cambridgeshire a full century — however, has passed since the gabardine or smock was as honourable & distinction of carters and shepherds as the uniforms of the men in our fighting forces today. 41 02 21

1941 03 27

Ancient tractors being used in field as precaution against parachutists – photos – 41 03 27

1941 03 28

Relics of a Former Industry. — In Cambridge market recently a farmer was heard to complain about the growth of teasels in one of his pastures, saying that try as he would, he could not get rid of them. He wondered how they came to grow there, as old inhabitants of the district had told him they had no knowledge of any teasels being planted in the field. It was then that a brother farmer ventured to explain the presence of teasels on the land, and his remarks may be of interest (says a correspondent), as teasels are by no means uncommon in some parts of the county. Centuries ago, particularly during the reign of Richard Third (1483-85), the baize industry flourished in East Anglia and later Colchester and Norwich became centres of the industry, with the result that teasels used for raising the nap of the material were grown in large quantities for manufacturers. 41 03 28

1941 04 28

Land Army – 100 assemble on Parker's Piece for rally; need billets – 41 04 28

1941 05 19

Gt Shelford farmer fined as failed to plough land at Stapleford – 41 05 19b

1941 07 14

Miracle of reclaimed fenland – potatoes grow on land that was derelict a few months ago At Feltwell Fen; new branch of the light railway known as 'Bread and Butter Express' and owned by Ministry of Agriculture – 41 07 14

1941 08 15

Wilburton farmer Fitch Everitt fined for failing to plough up land as required by War Ag; planted new trees – 41 08 15

1941 08 22

Snacks for Farm Workers. It is hoped to start a temporary canteen at Stapleford for the provision of snacks for harvest workers, to be opened on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. This was to have started this week, but was held up, waiting for the meat. It is hoped this difficulty will soon be solved and the food provided. The farmers' wives in the village are making a special effort to help, the cooking being done at Bury Farm and Magog Farm. Mrs. Layng, of Three Ways, is acting as secretary. At Melbourn, a harvest canteen opened at the council school last week 41 08 22

1941 08 20

Harvest Horn. Among the "Wanted" advertisements in last week's paper (writes Watchman) was one asking for "domestic bygones," and making special mention of old fire hooks, a farm smock, a harvest horn, articles required for the Old English Museum in Shepreth. A correspondent, himself a

collector of antiquities, says it is good to know that such bygones are being sought after and saved from destruction. Smocks and fire hooks are bulky articles not likely to be destroyed, but the harvest horn, a comparatively small instrument, may easily be overlooked, mislaid or cast aside as something of no importance, and perhaps not understood by the average villager today. Years ago in every agricultural village at harvest time, it was customary for a boy to walk slowly through a village, at or shortly before sunrise, and blow a horn as a signal for the labourer to go into the harvest fields. These horns were of simple design and of various sizes, and were sold mainly at Stourbridge Fair. Those in common use in Cambridgeshire were of stout block-tin, 16 "inches in length, straight in shape, and tapering from a quarter of an inch (excluding trumpet-like mouthpiece) to an opening of about 2½ inches in diameter. The last of the horn-blowers in South Cambridgeshire was William King, of Melbourn, who died in December, 1935, aged 84 years. When a lad of about seven years of age (say about 1858) he was chosen to perambulate at sunrise and blow the horn, a harvest-time job he did for several years, his horn notes being heard at times both at Shepreth and Meldreth. 41 08 29

1941 09 26

Harvest Supper—New Style. In years gone by the harvest supper. "hawky" or "horkey," was a popular event in the villages of Cambridgeshire, and last Friday the custom was revived—but with a difference (says Watchman). This new-style "horkey" took place at Stapleford, and was organised by the committee of the canteen that has been run there for the harvest workers. It was given to farmers and workers who had patronised the canteen and thus enabled them to get the benefit of the small profit made on the harvest snacks. 49 09 26

1941 10 03

Large sale at Hauxton. Farmers from all over England attended a dispersal sale at Manor Farm, Hauxton, on Friday afternoon, when the entire attested herd of pure-bred Jersey cattle and seven horses, in addition to a quantity of agricultural implements and dairy utensils of Mr. H. B. Hart were sold by auction. The steady prices which prevailed proved that while show stock is in demand these times at a discount, there is a real demand for quality milk producers. 41 10 03

1941 10 10

Gleaning at Willingham. Following upon correspondents' recollections of gleaning in Cambridgeshire, says Watchman, a reader at Willingham writes: "Corn gleaning was the regular thing at Willingham in years gone by. At first they used to go early and stay late, but mothers with large families who needed it could not do that. So it was stopped. No one was allowed to go until the gleaners' bell sounded at seven o'clock, and they had to leave off at five. Different parts of the village went in different parties. The men would sometimes take a field to mow and tie and shock at a price; then the wife and children would help the farmer and would leave a sheaf in the field so the woman had the privilege of the field and other gleaners must keep out. Gleaners would tramp miles sometimes round about, villages, and sit by the roadside until they had done cutting. They would each take something with them at the finish and have a gleaners' tea and a bit of fun in different cottages—" 41 10 10

1941 10 31

A 1798 Chaff-cutter. An aged Fenlander (writes Watchman) has found in the family archives an illustrated account, dated 1798, of a "new" chaff-cutter, one which must have caused some sensation among farmers in general, and farmers' boys in particular, 143 years ago. This particular chaff-cutter was invented by Mr. Robert Salmon, of Woburn, Bedfordshire, and he received for it an award of 30 gns. from the London Society for the Encouragement of Arts. "It is so simple and easy to work," says the booklet describing it, "that a boy may cut with it as much as thirty bushels of chaff an hour. And further, it is so simple in construction that any carpenter might, after inspecting it, easily make one." "Oh to be a farmer's boy," says my correspondent, "and to be expected to cut 30 bushels of chaff in an hour with a huge hand-propelled machine." A description, useless without the heavily-lettered illustration, is too lengthy to be given. Briefly the machine is a cumbersome mixture of cutting-knives, wheels, chains, spiked rollers, levers, counter-balance-etc. 41 10 31

1942 04 13

War-time control of fruit crops, derelict orchards – 42 04 13c

1942 06 15

King and Queen Tour Fens. Their Majesties the King and Queen on Saturday paid a visit to reclaimed fen land in Cambridgeshire, and saw for themselves the magnificent work that is being carried out by the Cambs War Agricultural Executive on the vital food front. Indeed the whole five thousand acres at Swaffham Prior Fen and Adventurers Fen, Burwell is nothing more nor less than a battlefield where men and women, armed with the latest weapons of agriculture, are carrying out relentless warfare against rushes, scrub, bog oaks and flooding. Considerably more than half the 5,000 acres was derelict in 1939; the remainder produced only moderate crops . . . During their visit their Majesties travelled over miles of new concrete roads through Reach to Adventurers Fen, Burwell where they embarked on barges at Cock Up Bridge on Burwell Lode, which runs through artificial banks above the level of the fen. While the barges were sailing down the Lode demonstrations of blasting bog oaks by explosives were given – 42 06 15, 15a-b

1942 06 25

MPs tour fens around Swaffham Prior House, a hostel where 65 members Land Army reside – 42 06 25d

1942 08 14

Harvest Volunteers. A party of harvest volunteers, organised jointly by the Cambs. War Agricultural Emergency Committee and a Cambridge political party, completed its first 14 days' work at Bourn, where 14 workers shocked 35 acres of winter oats in seven hours. This was only the first week-end campaign. One bus only is being run at present, in which there is accommodation for 30 people, so more recruits would be welcomed. 42 08 14

1942 12 18

20th Century Domesday Book. A survey of all agricultural holdings of over five acres in England and Wales, which greatly surpasses in its wealth of detail the Domesday Book of 1085, is nearing completion. It has been taken on the instructions of Mr. R. S. Hudson, Minister of Agriculture, who insisted on the survey to permit the organised expansion of wartime food production. 42 12 18

1943 06 18

Growing Land Army. At the end of May, the Women's Land Army numbered 65,406 strong. Over 19,000 were in direct employ of the County War Agricultural Executive Committees and nearly 3,700 were engaged on forestry work. May showed a net increase of 3,626 in the total number employed. There are, however, still many vacancies to be filled. 43 06 18

1943 08 27

A double Miracle? — There is every sign (writes Watchman) that the harvest, in Cambs. this year will exceed in quality and yield that of 1942. This "is not only, as Mr. H. C Webb, the Cambridge farming authority, puts it, a miracle due to the weather, but also, I venture to suggest, a miracle of hard work as well. There is no doubt that when the full history of the war is written, many chapters will be devoted to the great part played in its success by the farming community and in this Cambridgeshire has won a worthy place. This is indeed not only the 'crown of the year.' but the crown of our agriculturists' valiant labours during the years of war. No one will quarrel with Mr. Webb's apt description— 'Victory Harvest.' 43 08 27

1943 10 01

Death of Prominent Farmer. By the death of Mr. John Russell Jarman, of the Grange, Kneesworth, another exponent of the old-style farming — now a fast dwindling race — has been removed and his death means not only the loss of a first rate farmer, but a high-grade cattle dealer well known and highly respected throughout East Anglia and other parts of the country. He had been in indifferent health the past five or six years and death occurred on Friday morning last at the age of 74 years. He

built up a large first class breeding flock of cattle and sheep and in doing so became a well-known figure throughout the West Country (the home of good cattle) and he was always a regular attendant at the Cambridge East Anglian markets. He came to be looked upon as one of the best judges of cattle and sheet the country and one of the ... farmers. During the last war, he was a Government grader of cattle. 43 10 01

1944 01 14

Agricultural Cottages. The first group of agricultural cottages to be completed in Cambridgeshire was officially opened at Waterbeach on Saturday, afternoon by the Chairman of Chesterton Rural Council, Mr. W. D. F. Davey, in the presence of other officials of the council and representatives of the builders. Built as a terrace, the four Cottages is situated in Piece's Lane. Each comprises a parlour and living room downstairs, with a kitchenette, and three bed- rooms upstairs. Electric light is installed and cooking is done on a coal range. There is also provision for hot and cold water. Another feature which will appeal particularly to the womenfolk is the generous built-in cupboard accommodation. 44 01 14

1944 04 21

Holidays with pay. A meeting of the Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely Agricultural Wages Committee, held at the Lion Hotel on Wednesday, agreed to a proposal of the Agricultural Wages Board that agricultural workers should have not less than six days' holiday a year with pay. 44 04 21

1944 06 09

C.B.E. for Alderman. Two Cambridge men figure in the first part of the King's Birthday Honours List. Both receive the C B.E. They are Prof. J. D. Cockcroft, Ph.D, Chief Superintendent, Air Defence and Research Establishment, Ministry of Supply, and Alderman W. C. Jackson, Chairman of the Cambridgeshire War Agricultural Committee. Alderman Jackson, of Fowlmere, receives his award for service to agriculture, besides being Chairman of the Cambridgeshire War Agricultural Committee since its inception, he is Chairman of the Great Ouse Catchment Board and has for several years served as Chairman of the Cambridgeshire County Council. His practical knowledge and experience as a farmer have given added weight to his work for all three bodies. 44 06 09

1944 08 25

Retirement. Having held office as district officer of the Transport and General Workers Union at Cambridge for 25 years, Mr.A.E. Stubbs is relinquishing the post to devote himself to politics in the county. Since 1936 he has been prospective Labour candidate for Cambridgeshire and has already fought six Parliamentary elections. Mr. Stubbs has had a colourful career, rising from a newsboy to become a local champion of the farm workers and working classes, and also directing his energy to other forms of public work. "I am going straight over to the political field to get ready for the General Election," he said. He has, for many years been a member of the Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely Agricultural Wages Board, a member of the Cambridge Borough Council for about 12 years and on the Cambridgeshire County Council for a similar period. He is a member of six Joint Industrial Councils under the Whitley Scheme.

1944 10 27

Oldest Ploughing Society? The Cottenham and District. Ploughing Society, which claims to be the oldest in the country, will carry on its tradition and hold a ploughing match next month. Their last match was in 1939. The secretary (Mr. E. Blunt) tells me (says Watchman) that, before the war, a running commentary on a ploughing match was being given by the B.B.C., the commentator stating that the ploughing society in question was 64 years old and believed to be the oldest in the country. Mr. Blunt wrote to the B.B.C. saying that he had proof that the Cottenham and District Society had then been in existence for 84 years. He duly received an apology from the B.B.C.

1944 12 01

Revived Ploughing match. There was a number of specially interesting features at the highly successful ploughing match held at Cottenham last week by the Cottenham and District Ploughing

Society—claimed to be oldest of its kind in the country. One feature remarked about was the fact that, here were 24 horse ploughs despite the growing increase of machinery, and another cause for comment was the large attendance of spectators—between 500 and 600, the largest crowd seen at the event for a great many years. Considerable interest, too, was centred in the newest type of plough, the "Auto-Culto," which takes the place of two horses. Messrs. Olivers' ploughman. Mr. P. Bowers, won a cup and two shields. The events in which he competed were open to ploughmen from all over England. It is not usual for three prizes to be won in the same match.

1944 12 20

Dry Drayton suitable site for Farm Institute – 44 12 20

1944 12 29

Ploughing match revived. Willingham's annual ploughing match, revived after an interval of 14 years, proved, in spite of the weather, an outstanding success. The competition took place in a Willingham meadow, the number of entries totalling 76, of which 33 were horse teams.

1945 01 20

George Kidman of Dry Drayton on radio programme, talks of tractor driving – 45 01 20

1945 06 22

Birthday Honours. The second section of the Birthday Honours List, published on Friday, includes the award of the O.B.E. to the following officials: Mr. J. M. McMillan Executive Officer of the Cambridgeshire W.A.E.C.; Capt. C. O Groom, hon secretary of the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Help Society for the Isle of Ely and Cambridge; Mr. McMillan was trained in Edinburgh, where he took a B.Sc. in Agriculture. He came to Cambridge in 1930 as organiser of Agricultural Education for the County Council, and at the beginning of the war was seconded to the W.A.E.C. He has been concerned to a large extent with fenland reclamation and the construction of concrete roads in the fens at Swaffham Prior, Burwell, Isleham, Over and Cottenham. The King and Queen saw some of the work when they visited Swaffham and Burwell in June, 1942. Capt. Groom is a retired Regular Army officer, living, at Wisbech, and takes a keen interest in the ex-Servicemen. He is president of the Workmen's Club and the Institute of Wisbech, and is also a. director of Groom Bros. Ltd., who are farmers in the district.

1945 10 19

Skilled Farmworkers. In the House of Commons on Thursday week the Member for Cambridgeshire (Mr. A. E. Stubbs) asked the Minister of Labour if he would give consideration to placing skilled farmworkers, namely common housekeepers and tractor drivers in Group B owing to the great need of the special workers in agriculture. Mr. George Isaacs, in reply, said: "I would, refer the Hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Hallam on 9th October, a copy of which I am sending him. The reply referred to by Mr. Isaacs was as follows: "Considerable assistance has been, given to agriculture by the loan of Service labour to help with harvesting and by the grant to leave to agricultural workers. The question to whether further steps by way of special releases from the Forces can be taken in under examination." We understand _that Mr. Stubbs is to raise this matter again in the Commons at any early date. 45 10 19

1945 10 26

Ploughing Match. A ploughing match of the Sawston District Young Farmers' Club and the Hinxton, Ickleton and Duxford Ploughing Society was held on land belonging to Messrs. A. Home and L. Howe on Saturday, when there were 22 entries for the horse and tractor classes. It was judged by Messrs. A. Tinney, of Horseheath; F. H. Garner, manager of Higham Estates; C. L. Marr and J. Smith. The competitors found ploughing difficult, as the ground was hard. Refreshments on the field were provided by the president, Mr. I. Howe. The event was followed by a ploughmen's supper in the Sawston Village College, the principal guests at which were Mrs. Bowen, who has always taken an interest in agricultural activities in the district, and who presented the prizes; Mr. Howe, Mr S. A. Taylor, Mr. J. A. McMillan, Mr. Tangney and Mr. Marr, Mr. W. L. Wood was toastmaster, and a

number of toasts were proposed and replied to. The evening concluded with an entertainment by the Foxton Yokels Concert Party. The following were winners: Single-furrow horse plough—1 S. Pledger, 2 A. Whitehead and H. Nunn (equal). Two-furrow tractor plough—1 S. A. Badcock, D. Neale. Three or more furrow tractor—1 E. C. Barton, 2 F. Whitby, 3 J. Wright. Three or more furrow tractor plough for young farmer's—1 J. Churchman, 2 H. D. J. Stigwood, 3 B. Beavis, complimentary, L. Allen. Special prizes: Best horse team—A. Whitehead; best tractor turnout—D. Stigwood; best work done by a Ransome tractor plough (given by makers)—I. R. Fordham, 2 H. R. Driver.

1947 03 21

An attempt was to be made this afternoon to rescue a bull marooned since Monday in a stall at Crane's Fen farm near Earith. It was hoped to borrow an army "Duck" for the attempt. Mr J Cook said it was standing in about two feet of water. "It seems quite happy but it may prove different when we try and rescue it. The job will not be easy as the animal weighs at least half a ton", p6

1947 03 13

From all parts of the district today come stories of flooded roads, following on the thaw and rain, with some of them impassable to traffic. In Cambridge itself, Parkers Piece, which for weeks has been an expanse of dazzling white, with not so much as a blade of grass showing, now resembles a lake. At St Ives some of the back streets are flooded fairly extensively, the water on the road to a depth of about 10 inches entering many houses in the town, forcing people to move their belongings upstairs. Traffic had to be diverted last night because of the movement washing water into the houses. Three feet of water in places is reported at both Pampisford and Caxton, with vehicles stuck in the mud at the latter village and having to be dug out., p5

1947 03 17

In the still of this morning's sunshine there was graphic evidence all over the county of the devastation caused by last night's gales which produced tornado-like gusts screaming over the countryside at a velocity of 99 m.p.h. A tree fell across a Prisoner of War hut and Hemingford Abbots and seriously injured the occupants. When a tree crashed on a P.o.W camp at Whittlesford two Germans were injured. The complete roof of the kitchen of Downing College, Cambridge was blown off., p1, p2
Evacuation warning in fens, Ouse bank goes, p7

1947 03 18

Hundreds of men and women, troops and German prisoners among them who worked throughout last night are still pitting their efforts against the biggest flood threat of all time. The breach at Over today widened to over 20 yards during the night and at about 1 o'clock this afternoon water began to pour over the top of the Old West. River bank at Haddenham. The break at Lt Thetford yesterday afternoon flooded over 2,000 acres, p4

1947 03 19

The bank has burst at Ten Mile Bank and on the River Wissey and water is pouring through a thirty-yard breach. A huge area of fenland is involved and livestock is being evacuated. Another breach has occurred in the bank of the Old West at Stretham and water is pouring in a torrent into Waterbeach fen. The waters of the Cam have dropped seven inches at Clayhithe but a break in the bank is feared about a mile and a half beyond towards Ely

1947 03 22

"Operation Neptune", the scheme to seal the great gap in the banks of the River Ouse near Over by using Neptune amphibians began this afternoon. Nine Neptunes - weighing anything between 37 and 40 tons each - are being employed, as well as submarine nets and sandbags. One has its nose against the bank several yards from the breach and a number of others are in a field about half a mile away on the other side of the river. They will be brought to the gap, line up across the breach and netting will be dropped from them. Tarpaulins will be fastened over the netting and weighted down with sandbags, p4

1947 03 29

On the subject of suitable cropping in the fens the National Farmers Union said today that provided that certain of the lands are drained within a month cropping may be possible - but one must bear in mind that the residue of artificial manure will have been completely washed away. Should the yield be low it would represent a financial loss and Government should guarantee them an average seasonal price on an acreage basis

1947 04 10

Flood clearance pumping is now being done by individual farmers in many places in the fen district. Some 25 small pumps have been issued from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries pump depot at Warboys. The depot maintains a "flying squad" which goes out day or night should any of the pumps cease because of need for service. Since the depot came into being at the former R.A.F. Pathfinder airfield is had dealt with between 120 and 130 units. The depot started from scratch with just three bare buildings of the deserted airfield. It is now a complete unit with canteen, and administrative office, petrol supplies and even facilities for doing a certain amount of servicing of motor vehicles if necessary. No sooner had it opened than a stream of lorries bringing pumps, equipment and what one man described as "an odd assortment of pipes" began to arrive from all over England.

1947 06 02

Agricultural show, Wimpole, p6

1947 06 20

The fen floods and emergency payment to be made for damage done by them were the subject of discussion in parliament. The Ministry of Agriculture said it was a magnificent task on the part of farmers and workers to plant 1,950,000 acres of wheat. He mentioned that nearly 700,000 acres of agriculture were flooded. The floods were not due either to delay or negligence in carrying out drainage schemes, or to war-time drainage works carried out in the uplands. "We have no assurances that next winter nature may not break even the disastrous record of this year", he added. "Therefore much urgent work must be done if next year our river systems are going to be able to carry the volume of water that may descend on them"

1947 06 20

To-day, their work of pumping the floods off the Fens completed, National Fire service men who have been taking part in "Operation Fenland" left the area for their home station. The men were volunteers who came from all over England. One said: "It's good to be able to see some concrete results of the work in cleared land after so many weeks of seeing nothing but a vast expanse of water going down inch by inch". In many places you see a land of smooth, dried grey mud, cracked into many-lined patterns by the heat of the sun. There is an air of desolation in the now-dry flood-wrecked farms. Yet the hardy Fen people are already moving back.

1947 08 06

Only in cases of "exceptional hardship" can private householders hope to employ in domestic service the displaced persons now coming into the area to help relieve the labour shortage in certain industries. Since the beginning of June some 1,400 of these displaced persons have arrived from Germany at a West Wrating holding camp. Their nationalities are Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian and Ukrainian. Ages range from 25 to 40. The jobs woman can take include laundry work, domestic service in hospitals and hostels, and agriculture, and these are the sort of jobs they have taken in this region. Men, too have gone into agriculture. I understand that another camp accommodating about the same number will shortly be opened in Bottisham

1947 11 03

Ald A.E. Stubbs, M.P., made observations on agricultural wages; he said "We have been carrying on with prisoners of war, displaced persons and any scratch labour we can get. It is of enormous importance we should have full production. We must have the manpower to carry it through. I think it

safe to say that in the next year the German prisoners of war will have gone. Poles will be going, and it will leave the agricultural industry 250,000 men short on the land. The fact that the industry was highly mechanised would make up for some of the loss of manpower, but would not close the gap".

1947 11 21

Last night the evening of the Royal occasion of the wedding of Princess Elizabeth, saw 800 Cambs farmers and their relatives spend in Cambridge an appropriately right royal time in celebration of the annual County Farmers' Ball - the biggest, and many thought the best, of these functions yet held. Appropriate too, was the choice of band, Tommy Kinsman's, described recently as the Princess's favourite. And the Princess's wedding was marked by a toast to the Royal couple at a small party attended by guests in one of the rooms of the Guildhall

1947 12 23

Sugar beet and children, p4

1948 01 26

Deep concern over alleged differences in the rations of European Volunteer Workers and farm workers - in favour of the former - was expressed by members of Cambridgeshire County Council. Capt Ockleston said displaced persons, "whether in hostels or need canteens, are getting 3s.7d. worth of meat a week against the odd bob's worth our men, who are doing all the work, are getting". Ald Stubbs denied that the displaced persons got any more food than the average person but Ald Jackson said he knew of a Polish camp where the occupants got in the region of double the ordinary meat ration. There were plenty of farm workers who had to take their breakfast out with them and whose wives did not know what to provide them with

1948 02 18

Farmers from all over Cambridgeshire attended a conference on "Combine harvesting without a drier". Roger North of Kings Lynn described his experiences of buying a combine harvester in 1933, when there were only about 60 of the machines in the country. "I was told by everyone that the combines were totally unsuited to British conditions and climate. Nevertheless in 1942 there were 1,000 combines working in England in 1944 this number had risen to 2,500". The speaker had only used his combine for wheat, barley, oats and peas and said he was against combining wheat without a drier. Barley was however ideal for combining because it did not easily become damp

1948 04 10

If farmers from all the countries of the world had been present at a dinner given by Pest Control Ltd at the University Arms Hotel, Cambridge, there would have been universal satisfaction at the speech by the Company's managing director. For he announced the complete overpowering of one of the farmers' most deadly enemies - weeds. "Being a pioneering firm working in Cambridge we have applied a pioneering role in the developing of selective weedkillers," he said. They showed a film "Gentle Menace", taken at Harston.

1948 05 28

Mr B. Audus, a Cambs delegate at the National Union of Agricultural Workers Conference expressed the need for some safeguard for British workers while foreign labour was being employed in agriculture. In Cambs there had always been a large number of casual workers, and there were men out of work while German P.O.Ws were being used on farms. Farmers had made great use of P.O.Ws and foreign labour on piecework rates at the expense of British workers. The Conference agreed to a resolution calling for the abolition of all form of foreign labour immediately

1948 05 31

Through a countryside hinting at the rich promise of a fine harvest, town and country folk flocked into Ely on Saturday to break all attendance records for a County Show organised by the Cambs and Isle Agricultural Society. Some 24,000 people passed through the entrance gates into the forty acres of well-laid-out showground off the Downham Road. About £3,000 was taken in gate money. Over

1,000 animals were on view and eye-dazzling exhibits of machinery made the mechanically-minded farmer's mouth water, though delivery difficulties made much of the machinery a promise of good things to come rather than of good things of immediate availability

1948 07 26

The experiment of a socialist village was advocated by Cambs MP, A.E. Stubbs, in the House of Commons. "If I had my way I would take land and put it down to small holdings, properly equipped with buildings and so on. With the present shortage of labour the farmers can never get the manpower to farm it properly, but the land could be properly dealt with on the basis of a socialist village equipped a school and modern amenities. The roads which have been built by the Ministry of Agriculture in the fens are all falling to pieces. It is about time something was done, once and for all, to give the agricultural producers a square deal. He ought not to have to sell lettuces at 1d each and find them selling in the shops for a "bob" each"

1948 08 13

Though many crops in Cambridgeshire have been badly laid by the rain, there has not as yet been a big wastage in the county through the weather. E.R. Benson, secretary of the National farmers' Union said, "The shortage of labour is a serious problem, this is one the Minister of Agriculture must have been aware of when he knew that prisoner of war labour was going. Owing to the sodden state of the ground binders will be unable to cut unless they are of the kind which can be power-driven from tractors. Sunshine is needed, not heavy winds, because stiff breezes will tend to shell out the ripe corn"

1948 09 25

References to the present position regarding the European Volunteer Workers was made at a meeting of the Cambridge Employment Committee. At Warboys a volunteer camp had been opened for the accommodation of volunteer workers in agriculture during the holidays and over 1,750 volunteers had spent periods in the camp since it was opened. The committee expressed anxiety with regard to the number of European volunteer workers unplaced at the West Wrating holding hostel and Mr Harding said he considered that the object for which these people were recruited had now been fulfilled and that recruitment from the Continent should now cease

1948 09 27

Speaking at the Cambs Parish Councils Association conference the agricultural adviser to the Foreign Office said there were two reasons why rural life was going to change fundamentally during the next 10 or 20 years. Food was going to be much harder to come by, and was going to cost much more, and the agricultural strength of the country was going to be of far greater weight than it had. We must make people realise that those who live in it are not "poor backward hicks" but real contributors. The country should realise its importance compared with the urban side of our life

1948 10 20

The "long haired cranks" who want to put an end to hunting, shooting, coursing, fishing and other blood sports were attacked by members of the Cambs Agricultural Society. Proposing that a donation of £100 be given to the British Field Sports Society to support their campaign in opposing the Bill shortly to come before the House of Commons urging the abolition of all blood sports, Mr P.B. Grain asked, "Why should these longhaired cranks who are supporting the Bill dictate to us people in the country about what we should do by way of sport and recreation"

1948 11 20

The position of European Volunteer Workers at the West Wrating Hostel was mentioned at a meeting of the Cambridge Employment Committee. Few of the workers were placed in the Cambridge area and they were not a drug on the local labour market. The manager of the Cambridge Employment Exchange said demand for labour still exceeded supply, particularly in building, civil engineering and agriculture. Housing was still a problem and any large importation of labour was out of the question.

1949 05 06

Stretham man illegal sugar beet, p7

1949 05 21

A conference of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England was told that the 1947 Agricultural Act would change the appearance of the countryside. It was going to result in a very large amount of corrugated iron and corrugated asbestos and the disappearance of a good deal of thatch, because thatch cost a good deal to repair. With petrol more easily available, more people would want to live in the countryside. "I believe it is important to encourage them because it will make cultural life in the villages more varied and richer", said Mr Pease, vice chairman.

1949 06 07

Cambridge county agricultural show fully lived up to its well-earned reputation of being one of the best one-day events of its kind in the country. The show covered 45 acres of ground at Trumpington that will form part of the site for the Royal Show in 1951 and can with truth be described as a "dress rehearsal" for the country's premier agricultural event. Bunker's row, smart caravan banking establishments – emphasised the fact that this was a business occasion. There was an unusual machinery demonstration where Messrs Sindall, public works contractors, had several giant bulldozers and excavators working in a pit.

1949 08 02

The MP for Cambridgeshire, (Mr A.E. Stubbs), having received complaints from mothers that some children do not receive the ration food allowed when employed on the land questioned the Minister of Food. He was told allowances are given for harvesting, including fruit, potatoes and root-crops, haymaking, threshing, singling, lambing and sheep shearing. If schoolchildren are doing work of this kind they are entitled to seasonal allowances.

1949 11 01

The county planning committee's decision to remove permission for the construction of a 30-house estate at Upware was criticised. There were 6,000 acres of land beyond Upware and there was a danger of them all going out of cultivation unless the farm workers got the houses they demanded. This would be nothing short of a national scandal, but men could not be persuaded to go back to the land unless they were given amenities – water, electricity and particularly houses.

1949 12 03

A motion that overtime on Saturdays for farm workers should operate from noon instead of 1pm was defeated at the Agricultural Wages Committee. Mr A.E. Stubbs said many farm labourers played football or cricket on Saturday afternoons and they should be let off earlier for that reason. It simply meant making an earlier start. In addition farming communities no longer relied on the villages for shopping and now went into town. Cambridge shopkeepers were closing between 4.30 and 5 pm on Saturdays and that affected farming people who had to travel in

1949 11 28

Over Fen Committee are vigorously building up their case to present to the Land Commission in order to prevent Over and Bare fens being taken over by the Government. To illustrate what could happen Mr Mealling said he bought a smallholding near Caxton Gibbet ten years ago. As a war gesture he allowed it to be cultivated by the Government, who had later extended this War Emergency Act to 1950. "My land was taken over and ever since I have seen men skim the cream off my land while I sit there wanting a living", he said. The Vicar said there were 80 fields in Bare Fen of about 3 ½ acres which was extremely valuable to the owners and occupiers, as it provided out-wintering for stock for which there was no other accommodation. If it is taken and blocked there are going to be men here who cannot graze or stock cattle

1949 12 09

A further 6,550 acres of Swaffham Prior and Burwell fens is to be referred to the Agricultural Land commission for consideration as to whether it should be taken over by the state. The Agricultural Act empowers the Minister to acquire agricultural land when it's full and efficient use is prevented by work not being carried out efficiently, or because equipment is not being provided or maintained. Opinion in the area is that considerable hardship could be caused should it be decided to recommend state ownership.

1950

1950 01 18

Crowding into the Gardiner Memorial Hall at Burwell, fenland farmers and smallholders decided to form an action committee to fight a Ministry of Agriculture proposal to put 6,550 acres of lands in the Swaffham Prior and Burwell fens into state ownership. The area contains a good proportion of large blocks of land of 100 acres or more. If the land were purchased it would be at compulsory purchase value, without consideration for potential value

1950 02 09

During summer 1949 a Burwell farmer bought three huts at Wratting Common airfield. He intended using the rubble from one of the huts, two were of the "Nissen" type and the other reinforced concrete, to make a road at his farm. On Tuesday he went to demolish it. While inside with another man his son hit the wall with a twelve-pound hammer and suddenly part of the roof collapsed, causing injuries from which one man died.

1950 03 03

Work began a few days ago in digging out a bog oak, believed to be the biggest yet found in the Ely area. It was discovered about five years ago on Pymoor common when Mr A. Thompson, of Oxlode, took over the land for agricultural purposes. It is about 30 yards long, 12 feet in circumference and embedded four foot in the ground.

1950 04 03

For 25 years the name of E.R. Blount has been actively associated with the Ely Beet Sugar Factory, first under the original Anglo-Dutch organisation and subsequently as agriculturist since the formation of the British Sugar Corporation some 15 years ago. He has witnessed the development of a crop yielding 18,000 tons of sugar beet in 1925 to the present annual level of a quarter of a million tons. The 2,500 growers who now annually supply the factory will miss the familiar signature which has appeared on something like 100,000 cheques amounting to £20 million.

1950 06 22

The wife of a farm labourer left her husband and three children to live – "in primitive conditions" in a field with a German Prisoner of War, Bottisham magistrates were told. The woman was said to be pregnant by the PoW who was working for a Cambridgeshire farmer. The magistrates made an order committing the children to the care of the County Council, as they did not want to go back to their home because of village gossip.

1950 08 12

Small landowners at Hardwick, meeting by the light of a single spluttering paraffin lamp at Childerley Gate School, decided unanimously to form an association to fight Government acquisition of land already under requisition at Hardwick. Under the 1947 Agricultural Act requisitioned land need not automatically be handed back to the original owner if the Minister considered there was a case for retaining the land for "blocking" into large farms. If they were to have any chance of success they would need to fight the cases with all available means.

1950 08 28

For the past four weeks about 60 children of all ages ranging from 5 to 15 of the Estonians refugees doing farm work in this country – there are about 7,000 in all - have been at a holiday camp at

Bottisham. The dual object is to enable the children to keep in contact with others of their own nationality, and to enable their parents to have a holiday on their own. It is the second year of the camp, under the charge of headmistress Miss S. Pruden

1950 09 05

The proposal by the Minister of Agriculture to take over 700 acres of land at Isleham fen has not been confirmed by the Agricultural Land Tribunal who heard an appeal by 33 tenants against it. The Minister's proposals were in the best interests of food production but there was a large volume of evidence that the land could be better farmed in small units. The land had been requisitioned in the early days of the war and administered since by the War Ag. The Tribunal also decided not to confirm proposals in respect of Rectory and Top Farms, Hemingford Abbots.

1950 09 15

43 flying farmers and their wives from Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire spent ten crowded hours at the other side of England and still got home in time for supper. By means of a specially chartered aerial taxi service from Marshall's Cambridge to Speke airport, Liverpool, they were able to witness the receiving end of the Government's African groundnuts scheme – the production of animal feeding stuffs and soap. For most of them it was the first time in the air. The party had boarded two chartered Dakotas for the journey as the guests of J. Bibby and sons, the well-known manufacturer of cattle and poultry feeding stuffs.

1950 09 19

The old barn at Duxford Grange farm was the scene of a happy gathering when Mr Harry Walston, prospective Labour candidate for Cambridgeshire, and of Thriplow Farms Ltd, invited the farm workers to a harvest supper. This was the fourth occasion it has been held, and a 220 lb pig had been killed to help to feed the company of about 100.

1950 09 20

The Ely beet sugar factory begins this season's campaign and over the greater part of the area from which beet are drawn heavy yields are anticipated, which may even constitute a record for the factory. In view of the very large tonnage of sugar beet to be handled, it is felt imperative to make the earliest possible start to afford growers every opportunity of keeping up to date with their early deliveries, reducing the risk of losses due to frost and other seasonable conditions.

1950 09 29

The 'Twelve Men of Caldecote' – members of the village's Smallholders Defence Association - have decided to fence off 40 acres of land held by members, in protest against the Ministry of Agriculture's decision to acquire the holdings compulsorily and have them farmed as part of a large block. "We have had notice that the tenancies terminate on Saturday, but we intend to carry on as we have done in the past, cultivating the holdings successfully", a member said.

1950 10 04

The disastrous effects of the weather upon agriculture warrant a return to wartime emergency conditions Coun Greenslade told Cambridgeshire Education Committee. "We have had a lot of rain which has affected the agricultural position tremendously. This season has been a near disaster. We haven't finished the harvest yet and when we shall get to the potatoes I don't know. I beg that children can be permitted to be employed for picking up potatoes".

1950 10 07

Into a schoolroom at Childerley Gate squeezed 150 indignant smallholders meeting in protest against the land acquisitioning policies of the Ministry of Agriculture. They refuted claims that smallholders could not profitably and economically use their land and get the fullest from it. Mr G. Martin of Arrington said: "Never before have the people of England dreaded the knock of the postman, fearing the loss of their holdings". Mr G. Mealing of Monkfields said: "We are living in dread of the agricultural Gestapo – it is not constitutional"

1950 10 12

Strong pleas by the county agricultural executive committee and the NFU have resulted in permission being granted for Cambridgeshire school children to assist in the potato harvest. Exemption from school attendance will be extended only to children over 14, who must be physically fit and whose parents must give consent. The performance of agricultural work other than potato lifting is prohibited.

1950 10 26

A farmer, who said he was forced to employ Czechs, Germans, Poles, Irishmen and gypsies, because he could not house English workers, applied for possession of one of his farm cottages at Fen Ditton. The occupant had previously been employed as a farm worker and tractor driver but had quit his employment to go to Marshall's. The cottage was need for another farm worker. Of his 14 service cottages this was the only one not occupied by an employee.

1950 11 14

Farmers & smallholders gathered at a non-political meeting at Cambridge Guildhall to protest against 'the unjust threat of the acquisition of land' under the 1947 Agricultural Act. The principal speaker was Mr J. Wentworth Day who spoke of 'the little men skulking in Whitehall who would like to put the whole land under one doctrine and dogma, whose aim is to bring farming under committee on which every 'spiv' and battle-dodger would have a job'. He said there was something like 10,000 acres under threat in Cambridgeshire. Mr G. Martin of Arrington said his father lived in dread that the postman's knock would bring a letter telling him his land would be taken.

1951 01 06

Farms get electricity, p5

1951 02 02

The Agricultural Land Commission have completed their survey of Swaffham Prior and Burwell fens. They make proposals for improvements and repairs to equipment and for the claying of a substantial acreage of the lighter soils, most of which can be carried out by the owners and occupiers, and say there is no case for compulsory acquisition for the greater part of the land.

1951 03 06

An agricultural conference at Cambridge expressed grave concern at the inadequate meat ration allocated to agricultural workers. Even before the recent cut the amount of meat given to them was not sufficient for their duties in all weathers. In the town other industrial workers could eat in restaurants or buy fish and chips, but farm workers were not able to take advantage of these facilities as they were too remote. Speakers pointed out the advantage of British meat and said home-produced beef meant less risk of foot-and-mouth disease.

1951 04 12

With some 16,000 acres of Cambridgeshire's wheat target of 50,000 acres still unsown and at the most only about a fortnight left to do the sowing, local farmers fear the possibility of a worst year than that of the 1947 floods. On many farms no spring sowing has yet been possible and work is anything from a month to six weeks behind. Mr C. L. Marr of Malton Farm, Meldreth reports that the heavy land there was waterlogged at the beginning of the week. Mr H.S. Kent of Chippenham summed up the situation in the word "terrible".

1951 05 31

The Vicar of Over send a letter alleging that the Cambridgeshire Agricultural Executive Committee was not cultivating properly requisitioned portions of Over fen. On Monday heavy tackle began ploughing the land – and he sent another letter enclosing a sample of self-sown barley which they are ploughing with heavy tackle. "Had I known this was the planned economy of the AEC I would have

asked permission to graze 100 sheep on it, but apparently in the interests of maximum efficiency it must go under", he said

1951 06 05

Portions of Over fen which so far are uncropped sprouted a "harvest" of notices during the night. It is held under requisition by the Cambridgeshire Agricultural Executive Committee. At the corner of Sharp's Drove was the wording, "To the docks". This referred to 12 acres of that plant. Where the AEC has recently been ploughing-in self-sown barley was the wording "In the interests of colonial development 2ft 6 inches goes 'down under'"

1951 06 27

Cambridgeshire education committee decided by a single vote that schoolchildren might once again be released for agricultural work this year. Mr A.R. Greenslade, a farmer, said agriculture had had the help of schoolchildren for centuries. They were already taken to do carpentry, metalwork and gardening. Mrs Rackham said they had been stopped from working in the Isle of Ely and Huntingdonshire. Dr R.F. Rattray thought it very desirable for children to help on the land. They should have experience of doing real work in the interest of the country & great educational advantage would be accrued. Others said there was no evidence that their services were required. "They will all apply to work in the fields and it is going to throw our schools into a state of upheaval", said Mr S.A. Martin.

1951 07 03

The finest "Royal" and the finest site – such is the general opinion about Britain's 1951 Festival of Agriculture which opened at Trumpington. Today's blazing sun was a pleasant contrast to the gales and torrential rains which marked Cambridge's last Royal in 1922. From early in the morning cars streamed towards the showground. As traffic pressure increased the effect made itself felt even on the outskirts of town where there were occasionally short hold-ups. But movement into the car parks flowed smoothly and to get from the C.D.N. offices in St Andrew's Street took only 15 minutes

1951 07 13

A petition has been sent to the King by the Vicar of Over about the hardship caused to owners of agricultural land at Over fen, held under requisition by the Cambridgeshire Agricultural Executive Committee which was not being properly cultivated. "My people have been deprived of their land for years on the grounds that they were not making the best use of the land for agriculture". They have been brought before Agricultural Land Tribunals and won their cases and yet have no redress.

1951 08 04

If a Ministry of Agriculture proposal to acquire compulsorily 308 acres of land at Arrington goes ahead, 14 smallholders will lose their homes. The Minister alleges that the soil, heavy boulder clay required heavy equipment land & cannot be effectively farmed as it is. But the men of Arrington disagree and put their case to a Land Tribunal. Between the two wars the land fell into a derelict condition; it was bought by a speculator at £3 per acre and sold piecemeal to purchasers, some of whom came from London. Dwellings – little more than shacks – had been erected

1951 08 16

Owners of six of the smallholdings at Arrington recommended for compulsory purchase by the Ministry of Agriculture have won their appeals. Some 80 acres were in dispute. About 275 acres in all will be acquired compulsorily; owners of the rest of this land did not object to the recommendation. The land will be handed to the Land Commission; the owner's homes and gardens are not included.

1951 11 20

Agriculture has suffered a severe loss in the passing of Mr Samuel Owen Webb at his home at Streetley Hall, West Wickham. He was grandson of Jonas Webb to whom a statue was erected in the Corn Exchange. He was the founder and first president of the Cambridgeshire Farmers' Federation. In the 1914-18 was he was appointed chairman of the War Agricultural Committee and again during the

second war. A keen showman he helped re-form the Cambs Agricultural Society which became one of the largest shows in the country

1951 12 10

For the first time, winners of ploughing societies' matches in the county met to decide the champion ploughman. The winner was M. Bowers of Cottenham who received the Championship cup and the cup for best work in the horse ploughing class. The youngest ploughman on the field, 14-years-old G. Bailey of Willingham bowed to a more experienced man when he was placed second to J. Hammance (Sutton) in the heavy tractor class, but he did have the pleasure of beating his father, E. Bailey, into third position. E. Blunt of Cottenham was first in the light tractor class.

1951 12 28

A Cambridgeshire firm is to do a first-time-ever-in-England job shortly when one of its helicopters will lay an electric cable. Pest Control of Harston have a fleet of helicopters for agricultural spraying operations and the Midlands Electricity Board has asked for their assistance in spanning a thousand-foot-wide valley in the Malvern Hills. Similar operations have been carried out in America.

1952 04 12

There has been a spontaneous desire on the part of the farming community to perpetuate the name of the late S. Owen Webb by some form of memorial. It is felt the most practical and one that would fill a long felt need is to establish an "Owen Webb House" in Cambridge to house the offices, meeting rooms, club rooms etc essential to the County Agricultural Organisations which he served so well. An appeal has been opened and the farming community have already subscribed handsomely.

1952 04 24

Cambridgeshire National Farmers Union heard with satisfaction that the Railway Executive had agreed to operate the 5.27 p.m. Histon to Kettering goods rated soft fruit train this season. It was particularly in the interest of local strawberry growers to keep this train in operation but if it is not fully used it will not be possible to provide a similar service next year.

1952 05 06

Nearly 400 agricultural workers, headed by an M.P. marched with two banners flying through Cambridge city centre. They were members of the National Union of Agricultural Workers – men and women – who had come for a May Day rally. Mr Walston said we had to get as much out of the land as we possibly could simply for our national survival. The farm worker was the important factor in food production & should be compulsorily protected against the danger of toxic chemicals used on the farms. Grants be made to farmers for improving tied cottages together with loans for building new ones.

1952 07 25

The National Farmers Union Owen Webb committee is anxious to purchase City council premises at Gresham Road, Cambridge, to form a headquarters for all the agricultural interests in the county. Cambridge was the centre of the agricultural belt and the headquarters of the farming fraternity should be in a place other than their present miserable and dingy offices in Corn Exchange Street. It would not affect the Council's housing programme one jot. If the building were converted into flats the rent would be such that no one waiting for a Council house could afford it.

1952 08 12

Although the Ministry of Food is to issue licences to growers for the lifting of maincrop potatoes a month earlier than usual there might be some reluctance on the part of the growers to take advantage of the concession. Late heavy rains may result in an increased yield and farmers may prefer to leave the potato harvest until the end of September. Labour, much needed for the harvest, is another problem. Loss of labour, particularly skilled labour, through Forces call-up has resulted in a reduction of the total acreage devoted to potatoes; even so the total quantity grown is twice that of pre-war

1952 08 20

Over Fen is not to be compulsorily acquired by the Ministry of Agriculture after all. The Agricultural Land commission had recommended the purchase of 535 acres to ensure maximum food production but they now need to restrict Government expenditure and will not proceed. The news is a great victory for the Vicar of Over who has led the fight against acquisition. On 2,050 acres of Lakenheath Fen, also recommended for purchase, the Minister say much would revert to its former derelict state if derequisitioned, yet the financial stringency prevents purchase now.

1952 10 23

Three farm labourers beet singling in a field at Westley Waterless had a lucky escape when they decided to break off for lunch two minutes before a Meteor jet fighter crashed into the field. Due to the heavy rain they decided to go home for lunch. The engines landed on the spot where the men had just finished working. Two of the men had reached the road but Mr V. Clements had stayed an extra minute or two in order to complete a row and was 50 yards from the crash. The pilot of the plane, on a flight from RAF Waterbeach, was killed. # c.26.1

1952 11 04

The opening of a new branch of the Country Landowners' Association for the Isle of Ely was celebrated by a dinner at the Griffin Hotel, March attended by some 80 local landowners. Lord de Ramsey said the area contained the best farmers and worst landlords in the country – the sinking of the Fens was enough to discourage any Fen landlord from being too enthusiastic in improving roads or laying down concrete yards. Landlords had been looked upon as political and fiscal whipping boys between the wars but now had a very real opportunity of recreating rural life around them.

1952 11 24

The County Council have designs on a quarter of an acre of smallholdings let to Redgate Nurseries on the corner of Hick's Lane and Cambridge Road Girton. It is proposed to establish a police station and house on the site which would give adequate supervision of the Huntingdon Road – a black spot for accidents in the past. The County Police force has been undermanned since the war and better accommodation would attract more recruits. The constable at Girton was responsible for policing the parishes of Girton, Oakington and Westwick. A council house was not suitable; if a constable had to detain a prisoner there was only the living room of the house available.

1952 11 26

One woman who says 'No thank you' to a mink coat is the wife of a St Neots mink farmer. He was one of a dozen mink farmers in Britain in 1945. Now he is one of 200 who are showing that the film stars' fur can be bred here as well and cheaper than in Canada and America. Mink are usually sold in trios – one male and two females – at about £50 for dark brown, £65 for silver blue and £100 for the newly-fashionable white. The chances of growing a mink coat in your back garden are not much. You would need 100 skins and they would have to be perfectly matched.

1953 01 12

A minimum wage of £7 a week without any alteration in hours was demanded at the annual meeting of the National Union of Agricultural Workers in Cambridge. It was needed in order to meet the increasing cost of living and to bring wages into line with those enjoyed by workers in other industries. They also asked Government to abolish the tied cottage system and bring rural houses up to standard.

1953 01 30

Ely Beet Sugar Factory has come to the end of another successful campaign, dealing with 316,000 tons of beet in 116 days, including a two-day stop when the boiler broke down, and produced over 44,000 tons of sugar, 7,000 tons of molasses and nearly 23,000 tons of dried beet pulp. It is a tribute to the farmers to say that in spite of all the handicaps of frost, snow and water-logged fields, less than half of one per cent of the beets remain unharvested.

1953 03 12

The former tenant of Tower Farm, Tadlow told the bankruptcy court it was a situated a mile from the nearest road and accessible only by a mud track. When he took it in 1947 it was in a very dilapidated condition. He cut back the hedges and carried on mixed farming but owing to the nature of the farm and the lack of proper draining he found it impossible to cultivate the full acreage and the last three harvests had been poor. He had sold his furniture and effects at the Downing Arms but was amazed at the way things went cheaply. People seemed to think the sale was a farce.

1953 04 07

About one in every 20 acres of fenland wheat sown last autumn has been destroyed by the grub of the wheat bulb fly. In the Isle of Ely, which is worst hit, the proportion of destruction is as high as one acre in ten. Very badly affected fields may have to be ploughed up and re-sown. Added to the losses sustained by sea flooding in the same district this will mean considerable reduction in the wheat production in a year when the demand is for more cereals

1953 04 22

With the advent of nationalisation it was found there were 157 villages without electricity in the Cambridgeshire area and now some 71 have been supplied. Work will soon commence on an extension of the 132,000-volt grid supply from Little Barford to Fulbourn. In addition to village development, electricity has been taken to 1,340 farms and isolated premises.

1953 04 25

A Fiat crawler tractor has been adapted to pull a Fowler eleven-tine cultivator at the NIAB experimental farm at Lolworth. With this implement 85 acres of Kimeridge and Ampthill clay were cultivated to a depth of 14 inches. The cultivator was originally designed for cable operation between two steam ploughing engines and was adapted for use with a crawler under the supervision of Mr F.H. Spieer, bailiff of the farm

1953 05 30

Agriculturists attended the opening of the Owen Webb House, Cambridge, which perpetuates the memory of the well-known farmer at Streetley Hall who died in 1951. It had been his wish that various agricultural interests should be centred in one building. There are club facilities where meals will be provided, a licensed bar and a fair-sized car park, a necessary requirement in Cambridge. Outside organisations connected with agriculture can take advantage of the facilities and hire the conference room

1953 07 17

The Minister of Agriculture was asked In Parliament why Adventurers Fen in Burwell, which was derequisitioned last year, is to be handed back to the National Trust in view of their expressed intention to flood it. How much public money has been spent by the Agricultural Executive Committee and how did he justify making derelict good agricultural land by flooding? He replied that the research work done at Wicken was enormously important. The National Trust land covered about 280 acres and only 120 acres of the poorest and wettest land would be flooded

1953 07 17

There should be nothing elaborate about a milk churn stand, but the majority leave much to be desired. Stands badly sited, flimsy stands leaning drunkenly to one side, stands with platform boards gone inviting a leg to go through, slimy platforms as slippery as a skating rink. If churns have to be out when the sun is well up some form of protection is necessary during the summer. Accessibility to the farm vehicle and collecting lorry is important and it must be big enough. A 10-gallon churn needs 14 inches square, and don't forget to give the lorry driver some standing room when he is handling it

1953 08 07

A tour of the extensive orchards of Messrs Eastwood's at Barrington was given by Farm Manager, Mr A.S. Baker to demonstrate important operations in modern orchard management such as pruning, soil-

management and grassing-down. The visitors were impressed by the very heavy crop of apples, plums and greengages and on the improvements made on the fruit farm as a whole. At the end of the tour refreshments were served in the new packing shed

1953 09 03

Two-and-a-half-tons of freshly-picked Victoria plums were destroyed when a fruit lorry from Chiver's farm at Hazelstub, Haverhill, came into collision with a coal waggon from the Haverhill depot of Moys Ltd. The impact of the crash, near Castle Camps caused the coal waggon's petrol tank to explode, sending both vehicles up in flames. Both drivers scrambled clear in time to escape being burnt. The plums were being taken to the Histon jam-making factory, having been picked that morning.

1953 09 15

The 1,429-acre Heydon Estate, the property of Mr C.H.A. Butler, and once the home of Lord Braybrooke, has been sold to a private trust who are to retain the estate. The property comprises the Manor, a medium-sized house in seven acres of timbered grounds, and practically the whole of the village of Heydon, with five important farms and holdings, a Post Office and shop and a number of houses and cottages.

1953 09 18

Sir – for six years German students have been visiting Britain to help with the harvest. One who stayed near Cambridge wrote: 'This week in an English family is what I value most of all ... and the friendly reception I got'. Next week about 800 students from universities all over Germany will be coming to help farmers harvest potato and sugar beet crops. If you can help offer hospitality please contact the German Student Harvest Scheme – Lord Pakenham

1953 10 29

An old-established ironmongery and harness business at Melbourn, J.E. Hagger and Son, has finished trading because of the increase in the use of motors and tractors and the consequent decline in the demand for harness work. It had been founded at the end of the 19th century. Before the war two harness makers and two apprentices were employed but now there was scarcely sufficient work for one man. At the small Bassingbourn branch, opened in 1911, one man worked on making and repairing harness.

1953 11 03

A wartime German bomb was discovered 30 feet from the Mildenhall railway line at Exning Halt, near Burwell. For over 11 years trains had passed the spot, blissfully unaware that hidden less than a foot beneath the ground was a bomb large enough to cause an unpleasant explosion. It was found by John Debenham who was ploughing a field when he struck something which broke a peg in his plough. "We soon realised it was a bomb and thought of pulling it out with a chain", he said. But instead he reported it to the police.

1954 02 25

The fight by farmers in the Swaffham Prior and Burwell Fens to stop the Government from compulsorily purchasing their land reached a public inquiry. It had been pasture until the Second World War forced the landowners to turn it into arable; much of the land had to be drained and concrete roads added. The Ministry claim the farm buildings were very poor and ought to be rebuilt but it was sheer madness to erected brick buildings because the land would not stand it, being black peat. It was not unknown for vibrations caused by passing lorries to cause buildings partially to collapse.

1954 03 29

Haverhill National Farmers' Union protested against the proposal to build a new town there. If they were forced to take in some of London's overspill population it would have a disastrous effect on local agriculture. There was a reasonable supply of agricultural work in the district but the

introduction of industry would mean that it would dwindle. There were more suitable places to house the overspill population: the 'scrublands' of Thetford and Mildenhall and at Harlow New Town there had been difficulty in keeping the Londoners from going back to London

1954 04 10

The days of 'cost plus' production of more food at any cost are over. In future we must aim at higher quality and lower costs; this will be good business both for the farmer and the nation and will widen the market for home-grown produce and make agriculture less dependent on the Exchequer. The national achievement of a net output of 60 per cent above pre-war was a major objective but at present prices the market couldn't take much more of our milk, eggs or pig meat. However the market requires a lot more beef and some good quality mutton and lamb and we need to make better use of our grass and forage crops as these will help cut the bill for imported foodstuffs.

1954 05 01

Three farmers from Swaffham Prior Fen, who have for five years been living and trying to farm under the threat of Government acquisition of their land have been reprieved. Altogether 588 acres were involved but the Minister of Agriculture has decided only to acquire 312 acres at Hundred Acre Farm, Burwell Fen. The Rev Eric Marsh, formerly Vicar of Over urged the Ministry to speed up such decisions: no man was going to develop his land or improve it if he through it would be taken from him. Mr Harold Sennitt, whose family has farmed in the district since 1927, had been threatened with the loss of 39 of the 45 acres of root crops he farms, Leonard Folkes five acres and Ernest Garner 90.

1954 06 03

Standen and Son, the manufacturers of Sugar Beet Harvesters, appreciate the needs of the small grower for a compact harvester costing about £300. Prototype machines were built and put to work in the fields where they operated for weeks on end. Often they were taken back into the workshops at night for modification and be in the fields again next morning. So the 'Junior' harvester was born and the firm's works at Ely and St Ives are busy producing the machine for this year's crop.

1954 06 03

Eastern Electricity says that more villages in the Ely area are to be connected to the public supply in the next six months. Already Mepal, Coveney, Pondersbridge and Ramsey Heights have been connected and Prickwillow, Barway and outlying parts of Haddenham and Littleport will follow. But it can only be economically justified if farmers recognise that electricity be used to the fullest extent as an aid to production and not just for lighting, radio and television. It increases their output and hastens the day when electricity can be made available throughout the whole of the countryside.

1954 06 10

The Air Ministry is being blamed by farmers for the flooding of the land between St Ives and Wyton aerodrome. They say that heavy rains were made worse by the aerodrome's extended runway that shot the water on to hundreds of acres of land. In the old days the water on the hill seeped through slowly or went into the normal ditches. On Chivers' farm at St Ives some 3,000 chickens were in danger of drowning and elsewhere water came up to the stomachs of cattle. Orchards were flooded, fields of beans had 23 inches of water in them & swans were swimming in a field of brussel sprouts. The floods have done more damage than those of 1947.

1954 07 07

South Cambs RDC proposed a development which would change the face of the old-world village of Litlington, They want to develop a nine-acre ex RAF Communal Site as a permanent housing site and replace hutments which are classed as sub-standard accommodation by 50 non-traditional homes, mainly to rehouse the 'squatters'. The site ia an eyesore but it has sewers, water pipes and foundations. Building would be fast and easy and the houses would be finished in about six months. But it is outside the village area, there were alternative sites and the land was needed for smallholders after clearance. It would destroy the character of the village and clash with the landscape.

1954 07 29

The Ministry of Housing have overruled the RDC and allowed the erection of a dwelling house on land at Main Street, Highfields, Caldecote. This has opened up a new page in history for a number of residents anxious to improve their properties. They had acquired smallholdings on which they wished to build a house in which to live. It was a community which could not just be wiped off the map and they would do what they could to develop the place. The making up of the back road would enable frontagers to sell off plots for development.

1954 09 09

Freddie Pope, 83, is a remarkable countryman who does a full day's work on the harvest field, working for his nephew, Mr Harold Driver, of Huntingdon Farm, Sawston. He looks after 60 head of cow stock and one day this year fed them in the morning, drilled ten acres of corn with his horse and fed the stock again in the evening. He went to live at Mill Farm, Pampisford in 1939; before that he farmed in the Ely district and was for a long time licensee of the 'Fish and Duck' near Stretham. This was in the Pope family for so long that the place is still known as Pope's Corner

1954 11 26

Haverhill National Farmers' Union is tackling the problem of marketing pork, which has been a worry to pig producers all over the country. There has been a glut of pigs on the market and poor prices were paid to the farmer, yet the price was correspondingly high. Their idea is to persuade local fish friers to start a new line in 'Fried pork and chips'. It will be a popular change for younger people after the cinemas and make a nice addition to the tea table.

1954 12 14

It was a really grand and successful annual show and sale organised by the Cambridge Fat Stock Show Society, but typically it had to rain. Nevertheless farmers and visitors kept up a steady attendance. By far the most outstanding entries were in the carcass competition – the first held outside Smithfield. The champion prize was won by Stanley Hoy of Holland Hall, Melbourn, with an Aberdeen-Angus polled steer while Messrs L. Shepperson of March won the class for the best heifer, horned or de-horned with no more than two broad teeth.

1955 04 15

Two men were fined £10 each for stealing 16 sacks of Brussels sprouts from a field at Ashwell. When the field was ready men were engaged as pickers on piecework. Each 20 lb bag was weighed, piled in the field and then taken by tractor to the roadside where it was removed by lorry. As the result of information received police stopped their van and caught the men red-handed. They had taken the sprouts from a field at Moggs Hole and were going to sell them to a man in Beeston 55 04 15a

1955 04 26

At the last two sales of machinery at Cambridge Cattle Market there has been considerable congestion in all the main roads and residents complained that nearly 600 cars had been parked in the streets in addition to more than 1,000 in the market car parks. The City Surveyor suggested demolishing loose boxes and a Nissen hut to provide 250 more spaces. The machinery sales were probably the largest in the world attracting buyers from overseas. About 250 tractors were refused for sale owing to the lack of space. 55 04 26

1955 05 05

A storm of brown dust is blowing high into the air over the Swaffham Fen area. Growing seedlings have been uprooted and plants torn from the ground by the near gale-force winds that have been raging in the past few days. It has caused serious damage to crops and important drainage ditches have been filled in. Farmers are now faced with replanting their crops. In recent years some of the landowners have been putting layers of clay on to the open fields to prevent any dust being blown about. 55 05 05a

1955 07 14

Seventy-year-old Bert Martin and his lifelong friend, Fred Peppercorn, have between them worked for nearly 50 years at the Grange farm, Lolworth. In recognition they received a Royal Agricultural Society medal from the Queen. When they were young they regularly worked 12 hours a day and during harvest worked from five in the morning to nine at night – all for sixpence a day. But a pint of beer was two pence and tobacco a penny-halfpenny an ounce. Such men are the backbone of British agriculture. Perhaps the hairs have turned a little grey and their backs are a little bent but their fire and enthusiasm are still there. When are they going to retire? Never: they want to keep on working as long as they can. 55 07 14

1955 07 16

The Plant Breeding Institute's new buildings and experimental grounds at Trumpington were opened by the Minister of Agriculture. It investigates the improvement of spring and winter wheat and breeds oats adapted to climatic conditions of the Eastern counties whilst in potatoes its chief concern is the battle with blight, eelworm, wart and virus diseases. A pathological section has recently been established. 55 07 16a & aa

1955 08 01

Electricity has now reached parts of rural Huntingdonshire. The new supply would be made available to ten villages and hamlets and 65 farms, a total of 360 consumers. By bringing modern amenities to the rural communities it helped arrest the drift from the land and assisted in agricultural production. It was a very difficult one to farm without mechanisation, but this needed electrical power the benefits of which would be felt both by the farmer and his wife. 55 08 01 & 01a

1955 09 14

Whitings Farm, Holywell Row, Mildenhall had been in size reduced when 60 acres were acquired by the Air Ministry. It was full of weeds and rubbish, some of the fields were sour and the hedges and ditches in need of attention. The tenant was a poor farmer and it should be returned to the landlord who would farm it better. But he had lost barley seed and four inches of topsoil in dust storms & was making the best use of inherently bad land. He was a Grade 'A' farmer and should be allowed to continue, an inquiry decided. 55 09 14a

1955 09 15

Chivers have installed one of the most modern milking machines at their farm at Haslingfield. It was built to their specifications by Simplex Dairy Equipment of Cambridge. Now two men can deal with up to 80 cows in ninety minutes in a building near the pasture with the milk being transferred direct to the dairy by a pipeline arriving completely untouched by hand. 55 09 15a

1955 10 07

Felsted Sugar Beet Factory has begun to receive beet for processing into white sugar. Amongst the first to send a consignment was Audley End Farms. Their Home Farm has obtained a good yield by means of a system of irrigation, unique in the district. A tractor-powered centrifugal pump distributes water down a network of aluminium pipes to 20 sprinklers up to half-a-mile away. Without it the crop would almost certainly have been a failure. 55 10 07

1955 10 11

A Waterbeach smallholder & member of the British Soil Association is convinced that the increase in cancer is due to synthetic chemicals used in soaps and detergents and the use of artificial fertilisers on the land. He deplores the burning of waste straw which makes good a compost producing healthier and better flavoured vegetables and throughout the long dry summer his crops have continued to thrive. 55 10 11

1955 11 16

An Agricultural Land Tribunal was told that land at Drages Farm, Woodfen, Littleport was full of weeds and crops were poor and light; thorn hedges were overgrown and fences non-existent. No drainage work had been done and the land was waterlogged. The buildings were in a very bad state of

repair and a cottage was unsuitable for a worker to live in. But the buildings were just as bad in 1935 and were ready for demolition then, crops had been drilled late because of the weather and gave a fair return in the circumstances. 55 11 16-c

1955 11 19

The farmworkers' case for a £7 a week minimum wage was irrefutable, a trade union official said. A number of influential farmers were saying it should not be opposed. If the present drift from the land continued – 25,000 workers had been lost in the last year – there would soon not be enough to properly manage the farms. It is reaching a critical point when the deficiency cannot be made up by the ever-increasing use of machines. There are now more power units on farms than there are men and women to work them. 55 11 19a

1956 01 04

Trinity College is to enquire into the average price of a Winchester Bushel of good marketable wheat in Cambridgeshire over the last 14 years. Once the price has been fixed the people of Barrington will have to pay. Under the terms of the village Enclosure Act of 1802 the church tithes were commuted into annual money payments calculated according to the price of cereal. It is the only local village affected by this particular form of corn rent. The last time it was fixed was 28 years ago when the price was 83d per bushel; now it will be nearer 131d. 56 01 04

1956 02 08

An 82-feet long bog oak has been unearthed at Clear Farm, Stretham. The trunk was over four feet wide and weighed over eight tons. It was cut into four sections before being removed by tractor to Turpin's woodyard in Cambridge where it will be cut and dried. It will then be used to make specimen items of Old English joinery. Only once before has bog oak been used in this way and the experiment was not very successful. 56 02 08, 56 02 18b

1956 05 07

An auction of 'Maypole Farm' Orwell, being sold on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, collapsed after an 87-year-old farmer protested. Mr Richard Long told bidders: "I claim this farm is mine. I owned it for 33 years, then the Ministry took it away from me by compulsory purchase. If anybody buys it he has got me to deal with". It was illegal for a Government department to sell property acquired by compulsory purchase, he said. After the protest there were no bids from the farmers present and it was withdrawn. 56 05 07a

1956 05 23

Cambridgeshire Agricultural Society was formed in 1863 and held its first show in a field between St Paul's Church and Station Road, Cambridge. Today the County Show requires 70 acres of land with covered accommodation for stock, displays and catering to cope with an attendance of some 20,000 people a day. Apart from 1924 when there was an outbreak of foot and mouth disease it has been held every year except during the wars and when the Royal Show was held in Cambridge in 1894, 1922 and 1951. It is a shop window for agriculture and enables the farmer to keep abreast of modern developments in mechanisation. 56 05 23a

1956 06 18

Continual rain affected attendance at the Hunts Agricultural Show, held at Houghton Hill, St Ives: only 6,000 visited, compared to 10,000 at St Neots last year. The Combined Royal Marines Bands arrived seemingly unperturbed by the downpour and marched through the town's main streets to the showground where they presented a programme of music including selections from 'South Pacific' as the rain became even more heavy. 56 06 18b

1956 06 30

Lightning struck a farm building containing valuable implements at Hall Farm, Barton Mills. The thatched roof caught light and £2,500 worth of equipment was destroyed; only one tractor was saved. A life insurance agent who was at the farm at the time used a fire extinguisher while the owner

summoned the fire brigade. A Mildenhall man saw the flash of lightning and thought 'a ball of fire' had fallen on the farm. 56 06 30a

1956 09 13

It is a 'black harvest' year as adverse weather has put paid to many crops. Where farmers in sheer desperation have tried to get their combines working many have found them bogged down and have to be pulled out by crawler tractors. The pea crop is practically a total loss, blight has affected potatoes and scab and brown rot have hit apples and pears. The tomato crop is almost a failure but sprouts look well. 56 09 13

1956 09 26

The annual Hawkey supper organised by Trumpington Young Farmers' Club was a real harvest supper in the old-fashioned spirit. Mrs V.C. Pemberton described how 70 years ago when hired themselves to farmers who took them on for a year, paying wages at the end of the engagement. In 1922 shepherds wore a piece of wool in their buttonhole, horsekeepers a piece of whipcord and men who were not much good for anything a piece of cow's tail. The bargain was sealed by both parties shaking hands on the 'luck penny' which was as good as an oath. 56 09 26 & a

1956 10 03

The Ferguson tractor has been a familiar sight since production started nine years ago and the introduction of a new model has been long awaited. It is built by the Standard Motor Company and costs £558, £25 more than the old model. It has a choice of three engines, petrol, Diesel and vaporising oil and a double gearbox providing six forward and two reverse gears. The man behind the wheel will appreciate the comfort of an upholstered seat. 56 10 03b

1956 12 08

London County Council does not intend to build Overspill developments in the Isle of Ely owing to the high fertility of most of the land. It would also have a detrimental effect on manpower resources available for farming which are already seriously depleted by demands of industries outside the county. But new industries complementary to agriculture might counteract emigration from the area. 56 12 08

1957 01 28

In the last year, 43,000 men left farms in Britain. Unless farmers improve wages and conditions the situation will become even more serious, the Agricultural Workers Union warn. Fifty years ago wages were around 15s, now they seek a minimum of £8 for a 44-hour week. Almost half of farm workers lived in tied cottages, a social evil which should be abolished. They must also make sure that no foreigners are employed in preference to British workers. 57 01 28

1957 03 08

Waging a constant battle against rabbits has proved profitable to Gerald Fairey who farms 2,000 acres at Linton. One rabbit can breed 200 progeny in a season but farmers get 50 per cent grants to destroy them. He is using gassing methods, then destroying the burrows to see they are not reinfested. Over 400 rabbits were discovered in one small area of land. 57 03 08

1957 05 10

In 1941 common land known as 'Quy Fen', was given over to grazing. When the war finished it was re-seeded and hired by a local farmer. Then three years ago 50 acres was ploughed up, causing an uproar. Now the 'Quy Fen Enquiry Committee' wants the County Council to investigate the actions of Horningsea parish council where three councillors and the chairman have resigned. 57 05 10a

1957 05 10

A farmer from Wayhead, Coveney said he'd started as a smallholder in December 1947 with two acres from his father, £10 in cash and implements lent him by relatives. He sowed an acre of sugar beet and an acre of potatoes and got on nicely making £5 a week. But he suffered bad harvests and the

wheat was overrun with rabbits. He'd bought a second-hand tractor for £30 but had sold it for £5. Now he had a £500 overdraft. 57 05 10c

1957 06 29

When returning from Ely Fair after a 'good night out', three Mepal landworkers saw Marcus Darby's tractor standing on the grass verge at Sutton with the ignition key in place. When one of them suggested "Let's have a taxi home" all three piled on to it and took it four hundred yards to the aerodrome, where they left it. The lads were of good character and had been well behaved in the village. They were fined £1 each and had their licences endorsed. 57 06 29a

1957 07 05

Fifty years ago landowners were passing through difficult times with some land more valued for its sporting amenities than for the food it could grow and there was a threat it might be nationalised. So a Cambridgeshire branch of the Central Land Association was established to represent all interests – owners, farmers and workers. Now more than 40 percent of the farms are occupied by their owners who bought them on favourable terms after the wealthy families died and the land was sold to pay death duties. 57 07 05b & c

1957 09 05

Chesterford Park Estate comprising 2,366 acres including Hall Farm, Little Walden, together with eight other farms, small holdings and cottages producing rentals of over £4,000 was offered for sale. But only one lot reached its reserve price. It will now be offered privately. 57 09 05a

1957 12 04

An Oakington farm has been judged the best of its kind in the country. It stands within the boundaries of the Royal Air Force base and is looked after by its civilian manager, 'Mac' McAvoy, assisted by the wives of service personnel and by children who are fascinated by the 250 pigs when the food bucket is clanged. Enough potatoes, greens, carrots and turnips are grown to supply the winter needs of the entire airfield. 57 12 04

1957 12 19

Turkey farm feature – 57 12 19

1957 12 19

Horseheath blacksmith, Ernest Ruffle, has retired after nearly 60 years. The last of the thousands of horses he has shod was that of Miss Dulcie Taylor of West Wickham. Agricultural mechanisation has caused a decline but although horses for land work will disappear, but there will still be horses to be shod for hunting, he says. Blacksmiths have to be strong: "I have been kicked, pushed and trodden on dozens of times by wayward horses", he declares. 57 12 19h

1958 01 08

Cambridge farmers met a group of housewives to address points of friction between producer and consumer. Why do farmers breed animals with a lot of fat on them when the housewife wants lean meat? Because during the war it was the Government who bought meat from the farmer and they always required a good fat animal. Why are potatoes so dirty? Because if they cleaned them we could see the blight and would not buy them – was one reply from the ladies! 58 01 08

1958 01 24

W.J. Adkins, butchers and provision merchants announce the opening of their new modern abattoir at Cherry Hinton with stunning pens, humane slaughter, mechanical handling of carcasses and hygienic condition. Adkins will purchase and collect animals from farmers at market prices, accept commissions from butchers and sell direct to retailers. (Full-page advert with photos of slaughter hall and carcasses). 58 01 24

1958 03 07

A Coveney farmer blamed his failure on the water-logged state of Poole's Land, an area of 26 acres which he took over in February 1955. Next year it was completely flooded and he lost about £850 because of the failure of the sugar beet crop. He did not know the land was as bad as it actually was when he took over the tenancy. 58 03 07b

1958 04 09

Selective chemical weed killers have played a great part in the encouraging increase in crop yields. Today a very large area of farm land is sprayed each year and the practice is increasing. But great harm can be done. 'Self-inflicted' damage caused by spraying one's own crops is quite common. Growers have lost tomatoes when the fine mist has drifted into glasshouses and contamination of grass by arsenical weed killers is a menace to livestock. 58 04 09a

1958 04 17

Jack Branch demonstrates tractor device – 58 04 17

1958 05 03

Mr E.F. Sheldrick took over Manor Farm, Fowlmere, in 1939, two years after the land had been requisitioned by the Air Ministry. When, in 1946, it became surplus to their requirement, it was taken over by the Agricultural Executive Committee to farm. The land was obstructed by buildings, runway and perimeter tracks and they handed it over to Mr Wedd, the present tenant. Now Mr Sheldrick wanted it back. 58 05 03

1958 06 30

While hoeing sugar beet at New Fordy Farm, Barway, a farm worker came across two coins. He took them to his employer, Stanley Randall whose son, Philip, found a further six then decided to dig the land. Altogether 227 coins were discovered, two gold and the others silver. It is thought a pot containing them was broken while the land was being ploughed. It is not uncommon to find pieces of Roman pottery on the farm. 58 06 30

1958 07 04

Farmers and smallholders are facing serious financial losses caused by flooding at Cottenham fen. About 400 acres are under water and crops worth thousands of pounds have been ruined after a large public field drain on the boundary with Rampton burst its banks following days of heavy rainfall. Farmers say the drain had not been draglined for ten years but that the River Board had adopted a 'Blow you Jack' attitude and refused even to loan their pumps. 58 07 04

1958 07 26

Britain's first Game Fair opened at Hall Farm, Stetchworth. The most famous 'gamekeeper' present was Tom Forrest, of 'The Archers' who made a recording for the BBC serial on the spot. This was rushed back to London and used in the programme. The BBC newsreel cameras were also there. Two game vans, designed by Percy Heaton, an agent of the Stetchworth Estate in 1905 were on show and Gunmakers' Row had a wonderful exhibition of models dating back to 1600. 58 07 26

1958 08 02

Farmers and smallholders who suffered as a result of the recent flooding around Cottenham were visited by an official from the National Farmers' Union. Many have lost up to 75 per cent of their total crops. F. G. Ambrose suffered damage to his potatoes and strawberries while D.C. Worland's pyrethrum crop was badly affected. The Great Ouse River Board has built a new bank at the bend in the Cut where the water overflowed but ditches nearby were still choked with weeds and foliage. 58 08 02

1958 09 02

Last week's rain caused flooding at Hornингsea because the ditches could not cope with the excess of water. One farmer, Mr H. Lewin, had to plough in 30 acres of sugar beet as it could not get through the ground. Every storm or shower brings the water back to clog the land and conditions are very bad.

More than a quarter of the barley and oat crops have been lost already and the wheat harvest has not yet started. Men aged 70 cannot recall such a poor harvest in their lifetime. 58 09 02

1958 10 01

Ten years ago Eastern Electricity's Fens sub-area had been faced with a back-log of work. Some 171 villages and about 4,000 farms had been without a mains supply – but now all had been connected. They had enlarged sub-stations at Bassingbourn, Histon, Chatteris and March and erected new overhead power lines. There was an increasing interest in floor warming equipment which was very much a 'coming thing' and improvements had been made in meter reading. 58 10 01

1958 10 24

Bird's Chemicals works at Duxford was founded in 1937 to produce artificial feeds for agriculture. They want double the labour force to 35 people and build six bungalows for their workers, many of whom live on a caravan site. But Duxford is an important airfield for fighters and this would interfere with the safety of aircraft. The site was also outside the limits of the village and would constitute ribbon development, an Inspector was told. 58 10 24

1958 11 28

An aeroplane on your farm! For the first time you can have guaranteed service for spraying and top dressing from the air. P.B.I. Aviation Division moves aerial farming from an asset for the few into a practical, reliable service for most of the intensive farming areas of Britain. Details from The Farmers Fertilizer Company, Royston - advert. 58 11 28d

1958 12 20

Ely Sugar Beet factory has again run into mechanical trouble. This time an alternator in the turbine of the generator by which the factory produces its own electricity burnt out, causing a halt to production of nearly four days. They are now using a small stand-by set which became obsolete after the new boiler house was built seven years ago. In the course of a campaign they process about 400,000 tons of beet and up to the time of the breakdown they had dealt with just over half of this. 58 12 20

1959 01 26

Ten years of planning has safeguarded the interest of agriculture in Cambridgeshire by keeping the better land free for farming and by directing house building and other necessities on to the poorer land, the County Planning Officer told parish councillors. They had turned down applications for large areas of land in the neighbourhood of Cambridge: "One can only imagine what would have happened if the builders had got hold of that land. Cambridge would not be so pleasant a place as it is", he said. Sawston was one of the larger villages of the future with its population planned to expand from 2,600 to 7,500 people. 59 01 26c

1959 07 16

The Minister of Agriculture opened new laboratory and office buildings at the National Institute of Agricultural Botany. The extension had been needed for a very long time: it has been bursting at the seams. NIAB was established in 1919 and in October 1921 King George V opened the Huntingdon Road headquarters designed by Morley Horder. Since then the average yield of wheat has gone up from 17 cwt to nearly 25 cwt and that of barley had increased more than half. 59 07 16, 18 & a

1960s The Cambridgeshire Collection has newspaper cuttings files from this date

1960

1960 01 18

Oakington railway station is one of the busiest in the area: 80 trains pass daily, 14 of them stopping passenger trains. However many RAF passengers from Oakington airfield find it easier to reach their living quarters from Long Stanton station and services can be disrupted by plane crashes. Large quantities of fruit are still sent 'up North' but there is increasing competition from road haulage firms.

One farmer says he prefers the rail as the fresh air blowing through the trucks helps to keep the fruit fresh. But the station suffered when a large local farming concern changed hands and nearly 700 tons of sugar beet was not grown. 60 01 18a & b

1960 05 31

The shortage of water at Willingham is entirely due to people using it for irrigating their smallholdings, says Chesterton RDC. There is more than adequate for domestic needs but all last summer it was run away on the land night and day. When people wanted to fill their kettles and have a wash in the morning there was none to be had. The irrigation lines were wasteful – they did not just watered plants but in between rows as well. 60 05 31

1960 06 02

William Everitt of Wilburton is 101 years old but longevity does not prevent him from being active. He is often seen working in his garden. Wilburton born and bred, he spent 11 years of his youth away from the village as a groom and valet in service at several large houses in different countries before returning to take up fruit-growing and farming and still rents two small-holdings. He became one of the first members of the Parish Council in 1894 and for 10 years was chairman. His wife, incidentally is aged 90. 60 06 02

1960 06 03

Not many girls can claim dairy farming as their hobby, but 24 year-old Margaret Stocker of Hemingford Grey helps her brothers farm more than 650 acres of land. Lifting heavy sacks of corn and cattle food does not present any problem; she helps with ploughing, straw baling, feeding the stock, tractor driving or harvesting and makes butter three evenings a week. A lively, interesting girl, she has the clear complexion of someone she spends most of her time out of doors. 60 06 03

1960 07 05

There was a damp welcome for early visitors to the Royal Show at Trumpington. But those who ventured out stared at the sheep, peered at the pigs and commented on the cattle and horses being paraded in the Grand Ring. In the Demonstration Area six red hot forges, each manned by two blacksmiths, were busy fitting horses with new shoes. One of the strangest sights was of farmers standing in the pouring rain watching demonstrations of artificial irrigation machines pumping gallons of water on grass already soaked by overnight rain. 60 07 05

1960 11 11

Bassingbourn Village College have inaugurated agricultural classes for young men between the ages of 15 and 18 years. The two-year course provides education for farm workers one day a week and covers stockmanship, crop husbandry farm implements and tractors using equipment provided by local farmers. Mr C.F. Standen, a smallholder, says 'You have got to encourage boys to go on the land nowadays. Farming is becoming easier but you have still got to have the men. The best implement is the sunshine: it makes everything so much easier to work" 60 11 11

1960 12 07

Fenland formerly produced fine geese which were driven to London, resting at Goose Hall near Waterbeach. An old lady remembers seeing them set off from the farm, being first driven through wet tar and then fine grit which resulted in a kind of shoe that enabled the geese to walk many miles in comparative comfort. Turkeys walked too but were equipped with a kind of leather boot which lasted all the way to London. Although turkeys moved faster they insisted on taking a good rest for the night while geese plodded steadily along all the time, snatching food as they went and just resting for short periods. 60 12 07a

1961 02 17

Competition between British Railways agricultural transport services has become increasingly fierce and many local farmers are faced with the difficult decision whether to transport their produce by rail, road or, in some cases, water. Gerald Fairey, a Linton farmer says there is far less difficulty in sending

goods by road. And lorry drivers take more care with the handling of perishable goods than the railway. But hauliers cannot compete with the ridiculously low cut-rate prices charged by British Railways for the conveyance of goods. The new 'Fenland Freighter' diesel-hauled train offers door-to-door service and a big saving in time and cash 61 02 17c

1961 07 10

Jonas Webb made farming history – feature – 61 07 10

1961 09 14

Lord Iveagh, chairman of Guinness, who owns the Elveden Farms near Thetford, performed the opening ceremony at a new dairy at Mildenhall. The Bridge Farm Dairies premises deal with all the milk from the estate, distributing it within a 15-mile radius. 61 09 14

1961 11 23

Claude Kirkup became manager of Cambridge cattle market in 1936 and has seen tremendous changes. He can remember the days when sheep and pigs were brought to the market in tumbrel carts or by horse and cart. With the advent of motor traffic the market increased ten-fold and animals now come from a very wide radius. Many Continental buyers attend the Monday agricultural machinery sales. 61 11 23

1961 12 20

The railway line between Cambridge and Mildenhall opened on Whit Monday 1884 with the Fordham to Mildenhall extension nine months later. The branch line was probably never self-supporting and today there are two trains daily. All the villages between Barnwell and Fordham are well served by buses and it is only Mildenhall and Isleham that do not have a satisfactory alternative service. All existing parcel facilities would remain except at Isleham and Quy stations which would be reduced to unstaffed sidings. Even at Quy staff would be provided during the heavy sugar beet season to assist farmers loading traffic, an Inquiry heard. 61 12 20a & b

1962 01 05

Alderman Albert Ernest Stubbs died at his home in Arbury Road. A Yorkshire man by birth, he came to Cambridge in 1914 and was for some years employed by the CDN as a rotary printing machinist in charge of the printing presses. In 1917 he'd been a member of the Agricultural Wages Committee and during the war was appointed to the County War Agricultural Executive Council. Ald Stubbs had an active political career on both County and Town Councils and was elected as Cambridgeshire's first Labour MP in 1945, serving until 1950. 62 01 05b

1962 01 13

A six shilling rise for farm workers, bringing their wages up to £8 15s. for a 46-hour week, is too small, Union officials say. A new system is needed if agriculture is to retain the men who have the experience and skill. Many are leaving because they can get better payment in other spheres. 62 01 13a

1962 05 14

Some 28 miles of concrete fen roads around Isleham, Soham, Willingham and Swaffham Prior are to be taken over by the County Council over a period of up to three years. Cambridgeshire Farmers Union had requested they should be adopted and maintained at public expense. The Internal Drainage Boards had agreed to finance the cost of bringing them up to satisfactory standard 62 05 14

1962 07 20

The Coypu is a large aquatic rodent from South America. It has enormous orange coloured incisors, brown fur, a long naked tail and webbed hind feet. It was introduced into England 30 years ago and bred on fur farms. The business came to an end in the war when some of the animals escaped and set up colonies. They are now a menace, burrowing into river banks, digging up potatoes and eating sugar beet to ground level. They survived the hard winters of 1940, 1947 and 1954 and there is now only a

faint hope of them being wiped out by severe frost. Last year a culling campaign killed more than 40,000 in East Anglia 62 07 20

1962 11 28

Standens of Ely, agricultural machinery taken over by Dental Manufacturing Co – 62 11 28

1962 12 28

Ely Corn Exchange, built in 1847 was used for the last time as a corn market. Only a handful of farmers, merchants and representatives of seed, feeding stuffs, fertilisers and oil companies turned up for the building's last two hours' use as an indoor market. Before the war some 300 people from the Eastern Counties and London congregated every Thursday and Broad Street was packed with people coming off the trains to the markets. Now market activities will be transferred across the road to the Club Hotel. The Exchange, recently purchased by a London development company, will continue to be used for a variety of events such as dinners, dances, darts tournaments and wrestling matches. 62 12 28a

1963 01 05

The Lands Tribunal confirmed an offer of £4,300 compensation by the Ministry of Agriculture following compulsory requisition of 75 acres of Burwell Fen 63 01 05a

1963 02 19

Mr S. Owen Webb was the first President of the Cambridgeshire Farmers' Federation which formed in March 1914 and even after his retirement in 1935 he had a great influence over farming until his death in November 1951. Now the National Farmers' Union is based at 'Owen Webb House' in Gonville Place which was bought from Caius College. It provides offices together with full dining facilities for members with a good bar where a lot of hard talking is done on matters that affect agriculture. 63 02 19

1963 03 13

Developers claimed that for all practical purposes Kennett and Kentford were one. Although planning permission had been granted for 1,000 houses in the area many landowners had applied so they could get a value on their land and had no intention of selling. But one farmer said he had bought land to build on and had no intention of farming. West Suffolk had given permission for 44 houses and bungalows in Kentford but Cambridgeshire planners opposed saying the site was open land half-way between the two villages and would spoil the countryside 63 03 13

1963 03 26

Plans have been drawn up to create a new village. The development at Bar's Farm, Dry Drayton, the first anywhere in the country for at least a century, would be undertaken by a private firm and envisages freehold and leasehold properties built to a high architectural standard to house about 3,000 people. A Board of Trustees would ensure it was completely self-supporting with its own shops. But some say that Lolworth, with a population of 90, should be developed instead to house about 6,000 people. It used to have about 400 houses until they were burned down in a great fire many years ago and nobody bothered to rebuild them. 63 03 26

1963 04 23

Someone misread a map and gave the wrong name to what will be Britain's biggest man-made lake after 1,700 acres of Hunts countryside is flooded by water from the Great Ouse. Seven farms and 20 houses will be inundated by the lake's 13 thousand million gallons which are urgently needed to supply water to neighbouring counties. The Great Ouse Water Authority had decided to call it Diddington Reservoir but after protests from Grafham villages agreed it had been wrongly named. 63 04 23a

1963 04 26

A revolution in mushroom growing which will increase production by 50 per cent came into operation at the 'model' Bell Farm at Nuthampstead. The new developments, using straw and chemicals instead of horse manure, cost no more to produce. Its formula involves some 20 different chemicals took ten four years to perfect and is a closely-guarded secret. The process begins in a covered yard where 35 tons a week of horse manure is turned by a muck-spreader to get rid of its ammonia content. It then spends a week in an enormous Turkish bath, then cooled before mushroom spores are injected. Covent Garden want 'closed-cup' mushrooms but Cambridge people won't touch anything by open cup and flat varieties 63 04 26

1963 04 29

A million tons of fertile Fenland soil is to be given away. Standing 30 feet high and covering 100 acres it has been washed from sugar beet processed at the Ely Beet Factory over the past 30 years. They get about 30,000 tons of soil annually which is dumped nearby but has run out of space and it is cheaper to give it away than buy more land. It is used to make up gardens, bank up roads and fill in rubbish dumps. Anybody wanting soil has to arrange their own cartage 63 04 29a

1963 05 25

Work continues to eradicate coypu colonies in Norfolk and North Suffolk with a systematic drive inwards from the perimeter. The outer four-mile wide strip has been cleared, trapping is nearing completion in the second strip and the next is being surveyed. Infestation in the rest of the region was lighter and more sporadic so Ministry of Agriculture officers, farmers and the public were given the task of clearing the area. The pests will continue to represent a threat to the farming community and the utmost vigilance is needed 63 05 25

1963 05 27

Until a few weeks ago there was a farm in the heart of Cambridge where cattle grazed in fields not a stone's throw from the University Library. Now Mr Dale of Grange Farm, Adams Road is moving and the livestock and implements have been sold. In 1939 the farm, owned by St John's, extended to some 200 acres but part of this was used for the building of a repair shop and later Churchill College. The farm house itself is large and rambling with 14 rooms and an absolute contrast to the nearby house on Herschel Road recently built by Lord Rothschild 63 05 27

1963 09 19

The fenlands could be drastically changed by massive landscaping operations in an effort to get rid of unwanted dust – a by-product of the generation of electricity. The Central Electricity Generating Board says pulverised fuel ash produced when coal is burned in power stations can support vegetation and agriculture. It is reclaiming nearly 2,000 acres of waste land and pit holes near Peterborough. Now bleak fenland can be landscaped with hills and interesting terrain on a very large scale. Waste from sugar beet factories can also be used as a top soil for the dust and be ready for farming within six years, they claim. 63 09 19

1963 10 11

Ely Beet Sugar Factory has started its 29th campaign. By the time it ends, four months from now, nearly half-a-million tons of sugar beet will have been processed into raw sugar which is sent in bulk transporters to refining factories. It draws its supplies from more than 2,400 farms with 300 men working shifts around the clock. Ninety per cent of the beet comes by road, the rest by rail. For a number of years some came by river but this was discontinued three years ago. 63 10 11, a b,c

1963 11 01

Rabbits which a few weeks ago were worrying Cambridgeshire farmers by their rapid increase in numbers during the summer, are now dying off quickly following another attack of myxomatosis. Literally hundreds of decaying carcasses are scattered around the countryside and where, just a few weeks ago, large numbers of rabbits were to be seen and shot, none can be found. The disease is carried by the rabbit flea and as more die off, so their distribution becomes retarded, leaving odd rabbits here and there unaffected. The traditional English 'Bunny; will never for long worry the

farmer by its destructive rabbits. But if the larger American cotton tail rabbit becomes established the pre-war problems might return 63 11 01

1963 12 06

Since 1950 there has been virtually no control over purpose-designed agricultural buildings meaning that even though farmers must apply for a small two-bedroomed bungalow they can erect a tall farm building ten times the floor area without permission. The development of larger farm units, more intensive stock keeping and greater need for covered storage has led to more and bigger buildings. Now the County Council is trying to get this stopped around Wimblington and Doddington 63 12 06b & c

1963 12 07

Paradise Farm, Mepal, has been presented to the Ministry of Agriculture by Ald Arthur Rickwood, the Chatteris farmer. It is due to have new buildings including laboratories used for research work. The fens have been rich farming land for 200 years but many farmers are concerned at the shrinkage of peat. The wastage in some areas amounts to an inch a year, a colossal amount over a long period. Farming techniques are changing all the time and it was important to solve the problems. 63 12 07

1964 01 13

Agricultural production is increasing but the number of land workers is going down. Farm workers were now more like the skilled technicians of the factory and a £10 national minimum wage was not realistic – it should rise to £12, Swaffham Prior agricultural workers unionists say. And toxic chemicals were still a problem – they should only be used under a licence. Ben Brand of Elsworth was presented with a cheque on behalf of the Union in settlement of a claim arising from an accident at work when wheat slid off a stack, knocked him down and covered him. He was off work for 34 weeks. 64 01 13

1964 01 23

Farmers have much to do in wintertime including hedging, ditching, repairing machinery and farm buildings. But they also like to relax with a little hunting and shooting. Pigeons do widespread damage to crops and their numbers have been increasing. Small birds are becoming a problem to fruit growers, one of the worst culprits being the bull finch which can strip off all the fruit buds. Sparrows are also destructive and target gooseberries. One fruit grower estimates an annual loss from bird damage to be about £500. 64 01 23

1964 04 30

Chronic problem for low-lying farms – rates for drainage on higher land 64 04 30b

1964 05 29

In 1918 two Sutton brothers, Baden & Stanley Powell were working on their father's farm when the milk from a small dairy was not making very good money. So they decided to make cheese, hawking them from door to door by pony and cart. In those days there were a dozen cheese makers in villages around Sutton and they had to work long hours. They abandoned the dairy in The Row and built a much larger one, Rathmore Diaries, near the church. But then the war stopped the supply of milk. By the end Mr Powell was the only cheese maker and today he produces a quarter of a million pounds a year. 64 05 29d

1964 06 08

Burwell Poor's Fen Charity has been in debt since they were set up in 1883 after villagers had rioted over rights to cut grass and reeds on common land. They'd armed themselves with cutlasses and staves and the militia were called out to restore order. But the charity had to play for the military's costs out of their income. Now they have sold Poor's Fen Farm and invested the money to supply coal to the poor and needy 64 06 08

1964 08 14

Frank Fossey, a Great Eversden farmer, has made his own museum of outdated and disused farm implements and other items of country life. It includes everything from ploughs to gingerbread moulds together with a fly-trap used in his mother's dairy. Many inventions are only 40 years old but are already out of date and forgotten. Exhibits are housed in a thatched farmyard building dating from the 1500s and have a great attraction for local historians. [They now form part of the Farmland Museum at Denny Abbey] 64 08 14c

1964 09 17

Retired Squadron Leader Douglas Thompson Adamson has bought Joist Farm, Waterbeach and is adopting modern methods on a traditional fen farm. He has built a 200-ton grain store in an old Dutch barn with eight Crittal silos equipped with the latest Simplex 'Airsweep' floor cleaning. He hopes to mechanise the sugar beet crop though he does not believe that thinners or gappers are altogether satisfactory for fen soil. Most important, like many farmers, he aims to expand. 64 09 17

1964 09 18

A.G. Wright saw 1,700 acres of his land at Haddenham swamped by the flood of 1947. Since then he has worked to avoid a similar disaster. He has a wide knowledge of fen drainage and has been responsible for many improvements meeting the challenge of Britain's biggest drainage scheme in the same way as he introduced mechanisation into fenland farming – with knowledge and a realisation of the enormity of the task. Now he believes the flood ménage is beaten. In honour of his work, part of the scheme will be named after him 64 09 18a

1964 09 25

Cambridgeshire's 19 wartime airfields are falling into disuse or being reclaimed as farm land. Weed-choked runways, derelict barracks and tumbledown conning towers are all that is left. At Duxford the concrete baffles have been demolished and its runways are disappearing with the rubble being used for housing and road building. Waterbeach had a succession of Vikings and Vampires aircraft but now it is mainly trainers that take off. At Bottisham many of the buildings are used for storing grain. But Mepal, which recently had a Thor missile base, is now in the hands of the Americans – 64 09 25c

1964 10 01

The new Arthur Rickwood Experimental Husbandry Farm at Mepal will soon start trials to find out how peat soils can be conserved and wastage stopped. This was requested by Ald Rickwood when he gave the farm to the nation. The effects of herbicide will be studied together with irrigation techniques. The variety of sub-soils means that the farm is ideal for such experimental work. 64 10 01

1964 12 15

New farm reservoir completed at Herringswell for land irrigation – 64 12 15

1965 01 04

The statue of Jonas Webb, an internationally-famous 19th-century sheep farmer may be moved from the Corn Exchange to Parker's Piece overlooking the National Farmers' Union headquarters, Owen Jebb House. The statue was erected over 100 years ago and originally stood in the Market Place. But the constant attention of students and pigeons necessitated its removal to the Corn Exchange. – 65 01 04

1965 01 07

Hawes farm, Padney near Wicken has starling results with new variety of potato, Desire – 65 01 07d

1965 02 24

There has been difficulty in encouraging industrial growth in Ely. What industry there is is agriculturally based and exceptions like boat-building are few. But the reliance on agriculture could prove unfortunate: there is no certainty yet that the Arthur Rickwood Experimental Husbandry Farm at Mepal will be successful in solving the problem of the shrinkage of the fen soil, which is a very real menace. But one forecast says that in 50 years time the Ely area might be nothing more than a

paradise for speculative builders. By then communications will doubtlessly have improved beyond all recognition. Already nearly 1,000 people travel to work in Cambridge every day 65 02 24b

1965 03 26

Caxton Gibbet effigy of Agriculture Minister placed by farmers - 65 03 26c

1965 09 16

Marketing of farm produce problems – photo Pordage collecting produce at Gwydir Street for delivery Bishop's Stortford – 65 09 16a

1965 11 30

Arthur Rickwood, farmer, dies at conference; in 1963 gave Experimental Husbandry Farm at Mepal – 65 11 30a

1965 12 02

Longstanton station may become loading point for farm produce – 65 12 02a

1966 03 28

Hurricane winds ruin fen crops – fen blow; damage to houses – 66 03 28a; farmers count cost – 66 03 31a

1967 02 21

Ely sugar beet factory feature – 67 02 21

1968 01 11

Cambridge Cattle Market flourishing but farmers find Bury more convenient – 68 01 11a # c.27.3

1969 10 30

Hiam's farms at Shippea Hill, Pratts Farm Prickwillow, Ape's Hall Littleport and Stretham not sold – 69 10 30

1970

1971 04 24

Ashdon revolt by farm workers against low wages in 1914 – 71 04 24

1970 03 14

Decay of villages attributable to farm decline, p10

1972 05 19

Faith, Hope and Charity will never be quite the same again if the Government go ahead with their proposed motorway interchange at Girton. Faith, Hope and Charity are the names of three fields on the Cambridge University Farm - and their future is in some doubt because they lie at the exact spot where the city's Northern and Western bypasses are due to meet up with the A604. Although the university farm has some picturesque names - Youngman's Pasture, Pheasant Meadow and Stickfast - it is an experimental unit rather than a pure agricultural investment

1972 05 27

Hundreds of acres of root crops have been lost or badly damaged in the severe dust storms which swept Cambridgeshire fens yesterday. Farmers say it was the worst for 20 years. During the storm visibility was down to as little as five yards and trees were uprooted. Mr Fred Abbs, a manager of several farms totalling 1,000 acres at Swaffham Fen estimated today that he has lost more than 100 acres of carrots and sugar beet. Mr Abbs estimated the lost crops were worth about £2,000, p9

1972 12 01

A plan to build up to 600 houses on farm land off Long Road, Trumpington has brought mixed reaction from local residents. A Birmingham development company who earlier this year took over Cambridge builders I.J. Stocker ltd, want to build houses and a group of shops on land at Clay Farm. But some local residents object because they think the land should remain open. It is zoned as open space and playing fields, with most of it within the green belt, in the Cambridge town map. The developers said it would be a 5 or 6 year scheme from the starting date

1972 12 14

Ely may find itself heading downhill during the next 10 years unless central and local government come to the rescue, warns a report out today. Ely and the surrounding Fenland villages are among 16 "problem" rural areas listed in the Small Towns Study commissioned by the East Anglia Economic Planning Council. The report says the district is suffering; as agriculture becomes more mechanised there is a steady drift from the land but the influx of industry is insufficient to compensate. The result is a general rundown of the market towns and surrounding villages with fewer jobs, fewer services and fewer inducements to stay. The report urges inducements to industry to establish more factories in rural East Anglia

1973 01 22

Cambridgeshire farmworkers have called for a £30 minimum wage for a 40-hour week. But they turned down demands for strike action to back their claims. At present farmworkers receive a £16.20 minimum for a 42-hour week. An increase bringing it to £19.50 was due on January 22nd but was caught in the freeze and will not be paid until April. Little Downham farmworker Michael Collins said that farmworkers were living on a minimum wage. "We have got to throw down our tools and hold the country to ransom like the miners and the power workers. The country has got to wake up to the fact that we are an important industry and we want a living wage". Others pointed out that the Prime Minister himself had said that anyone earning less than £20 a week was on a starvation diet

1973 03 10

An ancient forest of bog oaks has been dug up in a 10-acre field at Soham Fen. A contractor ploughing the field only three inches deeper than usual found his plough catching two or three oaks in every run across the field. Mr John Fletcher who farms the field said; "I've been cultivating this land all my life and only struck the odd one, but this year it is just as if there is a whole forest of them. It has taken four men with two tractors a fortnight to clear the field. Some of the oaks were 60 feet long and had to be cut into three parts before the tractors could pull them out". A National Farmer's Union spokesman said "The oaks lie at the bottom of the peat soil on the hard sub-soil. By ploughing deeper Mr Fletcher has struck this level". He said: "Bog oaks are not as common around Ely as they used to be as most of them have been cleared. They are several thousand years old"

1973 04 03

A rota for extracting water from rivers for crop irrigation and controls on the use of domestic water are among the suggestions put forward by farmers to counteract the water shortage crisis in the Great Ouse River basin. Mr Derek Crawley stressed that farmers argued it seemed unfair that there should be a ban on supplies which were needed for their livelihood when there were no controls on car washing or garden hoses. The river authority pointed out that it is important to keep river flows to a certain level in order that there was the necessary level of dilution to check pollution and ensure the dilution of sewage outlets into the rivers. Already the Ouse at Denver is the lowest since 1934 when records started

1973 05 17

The fens were yesterday swept by the most severe blow this spring, as high winds picked up the lighter peats in the Soham, Stretham and Mepal district, uprooting new sown crops of beet and carrots, which are particularly vulnerable. The blow appeared to be widespread and raged for several hours. There have been two blows so far this spring but neither has caused widespread damage. Last year, more than 10,000 acres of sugar beet had to be replanted after a blow at roughly the same time.

A Soham farmer, Mr Guy Shropshire has been using a prototype machine which "plants" straw between vegetable rows to prevent wind damage on his 1,000-acre farm

1973 05 18

More than a thousand farmers and industrialists through Mid Anglia are being sent warning letters telling them they may be ordered to reduce their water consumption next month. A clampdown on the amount of water used for farm irrigation is now being seriously contemplated. Rainfall over the last year has been almost the lowest on record and now there are fears that the quality of Mid Anglia rivers may reach crisis point during the hot summer months unless action is taken soon

1973 05 21

Sir Harry Legge-Bourke MP has died at his London home. He came to live in Ely in 1946, the year after he won the Isle of Ely parliamentary seat from the Liberals. He farmed at Witchford for the next 12 years and named his Ely home Witchford House. Sir Harry played an active role in county affairs and was a popular and hard-working Member of Parliament. He fought eight campaigns to retain his Isle of Ely seat for 28 years. Sir Harry was often dubbed "the galloping major" for the zest with which he tackled his electioneering campaign

1973 06 20

Mid-Anglia revelled in rain last night. Nearly one-and-a-half inches soaked the area - about a quarter of this year's total rainfall - and although there was some damage to crops and minor flooding in country areas, farmers said that the rain came just in time to save the threat of poor crops. The downpour also helped the water shortage temporarily but a water board spokesman said: "No-one should think they can go ahead and use all the water they can. We are still in difficulties". The only flooding of any proportion was at Duck Lane, St Neots, a notorious spot for trapping water

1973 06 23

Two Mid-Anglia farm workers with 106 years' service between them will be presented with long-service awards at the East of England Show. Mr Bertie Cowl of Soham can look back on 52 years on the land, most of them working for the same employer. Mr Harry Pryor can look back on an almost unbroken span of 54 years on the same farm at Great Shelford. Mr Cowl was born in Soham Fen. When the late Mr Herbert Bedford took over Fletcher's farm he joined him and has been there ever since. As farming has become more mechanised Mr Cowl has one special regret: "I particularly miss horses", he said. Mr Pryor who is 70 started on a farm at the age of 10 as a part-time cattle drover earning 3d a week. "We used to leave off school at 12 and then I'd run down to the village to take the cows from the fields into the barns for milking". He has never fully come to terms with driving a tractor and still looks back affectionately to when horse provided the power in the fields

1973 11 09

The 10,000 agricultural workers in mid-Anglia were today bitterly disappointed at the £2.30 a week rise awarded by the Agricultural Wages Board after 10 hours of negotiation. The workers' spokesman said they were bound to be aggrieved at the award which gives a new basic rate of £21.80. The farm workers had asked for a £25 a week minimum wage. The higher rate of increase will go to tractor drivers, horticultural specialists, stockmen and foremen.

1976 01 15

Eight women working on an horticultural farm near Wisbech have come out strongly against the new sex discrimination and equal pay laws. They want to be freed from the legislation that would give them the same pay as the menfolk on the farm because they do not drive tractors or lift heavy boxes. They have told the Agricultural Wages Committee that as they are not willing to do this sort of heavy work, they would be satisfied with being paid 75% of the wages earned by the men.

1976 08 28

Stubble fire halt factory, p6

1978 08 25

Flames roared through more than 150 acres of prime crops worth more than £10,000 in Haverhill's worst farmland fire in living memory. The fire swept for two miles through six fields on neighbouring farms. Firemen armed only with flails and forks were powerless as the wind fanned flames across hedges - scorching trees and telegraph poles and missing farm buildings by only yards.

Reinforcements were brought in from Clare, Wickam Brook and Bury - nearly 20 miles away - as the blaze cut into 50 acres of oats and barley on Mr Bill Patrick's Haverhill Hall Farm. Police and even children armed with branches cut from trees, joined the battle

1973 09 12

Farm wages, p16

1973 11 09

The 10,000 agricultural workers in mid-Anglia were today bitterly disappointed at the £2.30 a week rise awarded by the Agricultural Wages Board after 10 hours of negotiation. The workers' spokesman said they were bound to be aggrieved at the award which gives a new basic rate of £21.80. The farm workers had asked for a £25 a week minimum wage. The higher rate of increase will go to tractor drivers, horticultural specialists, stockmen and foremen.

1974 02 09

Hundreds of in-calf cows in East Anglia are being slaughtered because their owners cannot afford to keep them, claims a Haddenham farmer, Sidney Ward. He also predicts a milk shortage. The price of feeding stuffs has doubled in the past 18 months. But the price of milk is still the same. The outlook for milk and beef is bleak because many of the lower production cows are not economic to keep in the present situation. When he started retailing milk in 1931 a full loaf of bread was the same price as a pint of milk. "Look at the difference now. We are in a crisis" 74 02 09

1974 02 27

Some housewives are being charged 100% more for meat than farmers were getting, Mr G. Duke of Ickleton told the Cambridgeshire Farmers Union. Mr Keith Roberts of Great Wrating maintained that the pig industry was "in a frightful muddle". The return on pigs was £6.90 less than last October while the extra feed costs were £2.95 more. "We need 60p a score to make pigs pay". The Danes were receiving £3 in subsidies for each pig through compensatory amounts paid by the E.E.C. 74 02 27

1974 05 02

Labour peer Lord Walston of Thriplow, said today that despite his plea in the House of Lords for a £35 a week minimum agricultural wage for farm workers he could only afford to pay that amount to one or two of his own workers. He said that until provisions had been made for farmers to get better returns from the market it would not be possible to pay the wages he wanted for farm workers. People could not, and ought not, to rely on cheap food bought at bargain prices

1974 06 12

After 50 years of growing and packing flowers on a farm in Fordham Mr Reginald Nicholls is retiring. He has worked for Mr Reginald Reader at Halesfield, Fordham, since he set up as a flower grower in 1924. He is foreman in the packing shed, where up to 950 boxes of flowers are made up every day for shipment to Manchester, Glasgow and London. "I can remember when we had 30 people working in the packing shed, and on August Bank Holiday the fields were blue with scabious as far as you can see", he said. Mr Reader said: "You can't make money growing flowers as you could. You can't get the labour. Some of the women who pick with me have been with us for 20 years"

1974 06 20

Farmers may face compulsory restrictions in their use of river water this summer because of the acute water shortage. Rain last winter was again well below average and the water shortage suffered last year could be expected again. The worst time was likely to be during the spray-irrigation season when farmers will be taking large quantities of water from the rivers to water their crops. A special watch

will need to be kept to make sure that sewage treatment is kept to the highest possible standard as the level in rivers drops.

1974 10 02

Fly-by-night greyhound coursing and poaching is again proving a big headache on Cambridgeshire farms. Those responsible always knew the police wouldn't get the time to tackle the problem. One farmer pointed out it was quite possible to take the same remedies as were used in protecting sheep. Where coursing was taking place the hares could be defended like other animals on a farm – with a gun. But the Chairman warned that this was not advisable. 74 10 02

1974 10 07

Haverhill is heading for an industrial boom unprecedented in its 20 year history as an expanding town. Formerly a decaying market town built around agriculture and a single textile industry, it today has more than 80 factories and the industrial estate spills over into the surrounding countryside. The town's largest employer is situated two miles away at Lt Wratting where Frank Sainsbury's farm has developed into one of the largest pork product producing complexes in the country, Haverhill Meat Products

1974 11 01

MP Francis Pym lambasted the government for complacency and completely failing to cope with the agricultural crisis. He painted a grim picture of the plight of the British farmer and urged immediate Government action blaming Agricultural Minister Fred Peart for causing the collapse in beef prices. The pig industry too was facing great difficulties. 74 11 01

1974 11 08

Isle of Ely farmers have called on farmers throughout England to be ready to picket East Coast ports in protest against imports of surplus Irish beef. The NFU said "People have found themselves driven to extreme measures not just to maintain their existence or improve their position but just for survival." In the 1970s it was not just a question of squeeze but of strangulation. Coast had been shooting up but returns had been falling almost as fast, a situation which made it virtually impossible for anyone to compete. 74 11 08

1974 12 29c

More than 10,000 Cambridgeshire farm workers are bound to feel "disgusted and insulted" by the proposed award from the agricultural wages board. They adjusted their award of three weeks ago by 70p, raiding the minimum rate to £28.50 with a £2 increment in July. Although the county's workers receive at least £3-£4 a week above the minimum the Nation Union of Agricultural Workers organiser said a few men might fall short of the workers' minimum target of £35 a week

1975 02 21

Housewives were today urged top take advantage of low potato prices before they soar in the spring. But while shops are now able to buy cheaply at a cost of between 1p and 1½ p a pound, they are selling them in Cambridge at between 3p & 5p. A glut of potatoes from the fens has pushed prices down to an unprecedently low level of between £16 and £23 a ton off the farm. A potato merchant said "One of the things I can never understand is why the shop keepers don't pass on the benefits of the lower wholesale and farm prices to the consumers, but they never do"

1975 04 22

Farmers dump onions, p7

1975 05 05

Exactly a year ago, gardeners and farmers were gazing at parched spoil, cracked earth and dry ditches. There was worry about the future of crops and the height of the village duck pond. Now the situation has reversed with a vengeance. Much of Cambridgeshire is totally water-logged – again there is concern about the future of crops and the height of the village duck pond. 75 05 05

1975 06 19

Farm land prices, p6

1975 08 22

Even at 93 years of age farmer George Graves is working as hard as anyone in the Saffron Walden area to gather in the harvest. The family use a 70-year-old reaper to collect in the crop so that the straw can be used for thatching roofs. Next week they will thresh the wheat using a threshing drum bought during the First World War: "We don't need to buy new equipment to do the job properly because the old is just as good", he said.

1975 09 06

Farms go metric, p5

1975 09 11

What is claimed to be one of the largest haystacks seen in recent years in East Anglia is dominating a field at Offord Darcy. The stack over 100 yards long and 20 feet tall has been assembled by farmer Frank Eayrs and is evidence of the increased value to farmers of the formerly useless fibres. The stack is designated for conversion into animal fodder at the new straw processing plant at Tilbrook near Kimbolton. Up to this year it might have been burnt as unwanted corn refuse.

1975 09 20

The failure of many back garden vegetable plots this summer is believed to be the reason for the increasing number of thefts of produce from farms. The thieves are stealing not only produce which has been harvested. Some of them are going into the fields at night to pick it for themselves. Recent reports include potatoes dug up and stolen overnight and several rows of runner beans stripped bare. Far more people have been trying to cut their housekeeping bills by planting vegetables in their gardens, and many have brought deep freezers hoping to fill them with their own produce. But this year's long drought has resulted in many back garden crops failing completely.

1975 10 22

Hare coursing, which has about 300 followers in Mid-Anglia, seems almost certain to face extinction. A survey carried out by the League Against Cruel Sports indicates that public opinion is overwhelmingly against it. There are six clubs operating in the region but the pursuit is not particularly a pre-occupation of farmers and the majority of the followers come from outside the agricultural industry

1975 11 13

The turkey, once a rare delicacy for the ordinary dining table, now reigns supreme on the country's Christmas menu. This season there are forecasts that turkeys will cost 40% more than last year with the top weights selling at about 50p a lb. One of the men rearing turkeys locally is Mr David Rayner, who farms 1200 acres at Burgh Hall, Swaffham Bulbeck. He has been producing turkeys for 15 years on an otherwise arable enterprise and now averages 10,000 birds a year

1976 01 15

Eight women working on an horticultural farm near Wisbech have come out strongly against the new sex discrimination and equal pay laws. They want to be freed from the legislation that would give them the same pay as the menfolk on the farm because they do not drive tractors or lift heavy boxes. They have told the Agricultural Wages Committee that as they are not willing to do this sort of heavy work, they would be satisfied with being paid 75% of the wages earned by the men.

1976 03 31

A quick morning's visit by comedian Dave Allen and a television crew to the Haddenham Farmland Museum unexpectedly became a full-day's filming. The original plan was to feature the museum in a six-minute slot for a half-hour documentary programme, but when they arrived they were faced with a

blacksmith, needlecraft specialists and a brass band, many of them pupils at local village colleges. They had to play at less than normal volume so they did not drown out the filming of a conversation between Dave Allen and Craig Delanoy, the 11-year-old founder of the museum.

1976 04 01

Farmers in the Waterbeach Fen and Swaffham areas were assessing the damage after what one of them describes as the worst fen blow he could remember in 25 years farming there. Huge black clouds hovered over the fens nearly all day as high winds whipped up the light soil and blocked many drainage channels in the area. The blow does not appear to have involved any other light peat land south of Littleport.

1976 05 15

Tourists left King's college chapel, Cambridge, when Stapleford sheep farmer, Mr Gerald Beavis, gave what many people took to be a demonstration for their benefit of sheep shearing. But it was a routine part of his work. With a flock of 41 Suffolk ewes grazing on Scholars' Piece he decided to do the shearing at the college rather than lose time by taking the sheep back to his farm

1976 05 19

Cambridgeshire fire fighters are facing their biggest crisis in years as open water supplies throughout the county dry up. Previously they could have relied on open supplies like ponds and fen drains when fighting blazes in the county. Now they will have to summon water tankers to help them. The chief fire officer, Mr John Maxwell, said: "For the first time in many years supplies are so low they are not sufficient". Now urgent talks are being held with Cambridgeshire National Farmers Union in a bid to stop farmers burning straw and stubble later this year

1976 07 07

Farmers told to halve water, p1

1976 08 13

Conservation areas on farms may be one of the causes of a rabbit population explosion which is the worse for 20 years. In some areas it has brought numbers up to pre-myxomatosis levels. In 1953 outbreaks of the disease killed 99 per cent of the rabbits. They recover quickly after an outbreak; in a sparse population females may produce 24 young in a year. One Essex farm has lost a third of their crops because of their activities. Another problem is that we have lost 15 to 20 years of experience in dealing with them because of the disease, said a Ministry spokesman.

1976 10 12

More than 500 women who make their living on fenland potato-handling plants are on short-time working because of the clump in demand. The plants, which prepare potatoes for powdered substitutes, chipping, pre-packing, crisping and the retail trade are only ticking over at a time of the year when they would normally be working flat out. As a result many poorer families are now caught in a poverty trap, working only 15 hours a week instead of 35. Even in normal times they earn between 60p and 70p an hour, which is well below the agricultural minimum of 91p an hour.

1976 10 18

A new sport was devised by an Oakington farmer, Mr D.W. Chapman: spud picking. Not the orderly picking carried out each year by part-time fenland workers but a less-refined version invented by ordinary people intent on surviving in inflation-hit Britain. The offer was 7p a pound for Red Desiree. "We dig, you pick" said the advertisement in the News. With forecasts of spuds costing at least 20p a pound by Christmas it was an offer not to be scorned; like diving seagulls people swooped, grabbing, scraping and grovelling. Others wandered off to a quiet spot, kicked away the top soil and clawed out the potatoes with their bare hands. One man lifted 12 plants and then noticed his wife was selecting the whoppers and leaving the rest for the vultures. "To hell with that", he said, throwing down his fork, "I'm off to the pub"

1976 12 24

A question-mark hangs over the hub of local farming at Owen Webb House, as the county branch of the National Farmers' union embarks on a long round of negotiations which could lead to Ely becoming the capital of county agriculture. Negotiations for the proposed site in Silver Street, Ely, reputed to be worth about £50,000 are still in their infancy. The Owen Webb site in Cambridge has enormous development potential but the secretary is certain that the centre, opened in 1953, will remain the focal point for county farming

1976 12 29

Dozens of people armed with forks and spades descended upon a potato field at Over for easy pickings. The recent wet weather and the promise of sharp frosts promoted a local farmer, Mr Brian Burling, to make potato lovers an offer they couldn't refuse. They were given the chance of digging as many as they could at the rate of £6 a row, each row concealing about one hundredweight of potatoes. This could amount to selling potatoes at 5p a pound; in the village shop they cost 13p. Not all the pickers were locals. Some had travelled from Cambridge and Royston. Some found that the digging was not only kind on their pockets but also helped to work off the Christmas pudding and turkey. Mr Burling hopes that within six days about 20 acres, with 200 tons of spuds, will be cleared.

1977 01 05

The golden age of British farming output and productivity had come to an end and a new generation of farmers will find life much tougher, according to Cambridgeshire MP, Mr Francis Pym. An incredible record of sustained production and productivity, unmatched by any other industry, had been upset by the present Government policies. "The years ahead are going to be hard and farmers are going to need all their reserves of will and skill to survive the difficulties", he concluded.

1977 01 05

One of the more intriguing battles to be fought in the New Year is whether or not Cambridgeshire County Council's 47,000-acre smallholdings estates survives in its present form. The estate, which looks after the interest of about 5,000 tenants and workers is the largest of its kind in the land, established to offset the more disastrous injustices of the Depression in the 1920s and 1930s. The question is whether it would be better to carry out a phased withdrawal, say over 20 years, and allow those tenants who wish to buy their holdings to achieve their independence. The issue is further complicated by the fact that the estate is undergoing a radical amalgamation scheme designed to create larger and fewer holdings which are more economic to run.

1977 02 01

Men stripped to the waist are continuing a chicory drying process used at a Lakenheath factory 40 years ago. Mr John Fisher has brought Home Grown Chicory Ltd and turned it into a profit-making business, carrying on where the combine, Rank Hovis McDougall left off after three years. Farmers within a 20-mile radius grow about 400 acres of chicory a year – all of which when dried goes to a coffee plant at St Ives. More than 10 years ago the factory was handling three times the amount of acreage and Mr Fisher hopes to encourage farmers to grow more. The main alternative crop is sugar beet but chicory does not require any pest control whereas the sugar beet farmer has to pay several pounds an acre to protect his crop

1977 12 08

A Cambridge sociology lecturer says Government cutbacks are welcomed in East Anglia as they provide the perfect excuse for councils to go on doing nothing. He found low wages, a high cost of living and inadequate schools, social services and public transport. The draconian restrictions on development, coupled with a fashion among townies for living in the country has driven up house-prices and rents to the point where land-workers either leave or accept tied cottages. In Suffolk conservationists, hand in hand with farming interests 'not only preserved hedgerows and views, but low wages and inadequate housing provision', he claims

1978 01 20

The village of Bar Hill has been slammed by an article in 'Architects Journal'; planning consultant Graham Moss claims it is artificial, takes up too much farming land, is too large and too posh. It has developed as an area of luxury properties, marketed through exclusive London agents who have imposed urban ideals on the countryside. Because the houses are so posh they are unsuitable for essential agricultural labourers, he says.

1978 03 10

House-hunters looking to live in the country should be prepared to put up with country life – like flies and farmyard smells, said Coun Ken Turner of Hardwick. "Some people come into villages – they might be called the bed-and-breakfast residents – and the first thing they want to do is do away with the country way of life". Coun John Impey from Melbourn said a chicken farmer had been threatened with enforcement action by the environment department after a complaint about flies. The flies were not from his farm and it seemed unfair that pressure could be put on a long-established business because someone had decided to build homes nearby

1978 03 11

Down on the pig farm something stirred, for it was the day of the VIP visit by the Leader of the Conservative Party, Mrs Margaret Thatcher. First came the locals, anxious to get a glimpse of the woman dubbed the Iron Maiden. Next came the convoy of Pressmen, then the motorcade of organisers and officials. All eyes stretched skywards for a glimpse of the helicopter which ferried her from a tub-thumping speech at Wisbech to the Sears Brothers pig unit at Manea, one of the largest and most modern in the area. She was soon talking shop with the stockman, Mr Grenville Emmerson. Mrs Thatcher described it as the most efficient pig farm she had seen and with a classic smile and wave she was off to Peterborough, leaving the pigs to wonder what all the fuss had been about.

1978 03 28

Naturalists are trying to account for a dramatic decline in the number of hares in Cambridgeshire. It's reached such an extent that the Cambridge Woodpigeon Club who have traditionally rounded off their winter stints with a hare shoot, have had to call it off. Various theories have been put forward for their decline including high prices which could have led to them being overexploited recently. A lot of hares are shot for export to the Continent. Farmers however are pleased at the drop for it means less damage to crops where the impact of hares has sometimes been overlooked because of the even worse damage done by rabbits.

1978 04 07

A growing number of rampaging foxes are causing havoc among the hens and ducks of the area around Wicken Fen, but the warden doubts the foxes are breeding on the fen. Farmer Stephen Beckett of Isleham said: "Four or five years ago we didn't know what a fox was around here. But now we've got them all over the area. Six weeks ago my brother saw a group of three on his land". The secretary of the Naturalists' Trust said the fox population had gone up very markedly, but so has the rabbit population which causes more damage. Elsewhere huntsmen are complaining of a shortage because of a demand for red fox fur by the fashion industry. An uncured pelt can fetch £18 before the furrier and fashion house begin to mark up the price of the finished article.

1978 05 31

A scheme which could save thousands of pounds a year is likely to be pigeon-holed because its implications are too radical for most Cambridgeshire county councillors. They run the largest smallholdings estates in the country but a report recommends it should be reduced by a third. If the land is sold the council would lose £340,000 a year in rents but would make a capital gain of £10 million. It is likely the old guard will opt for merging holdings and selling off surplus land, but perhaps in five years a different view might prevail.

1978 06 01

Lives are at risk from rapid flooding because of the inadequacy of Cambridgeshire's archaic drainage system, a councillor claims. A key part of the system, Earith sluice gates, is governed by regulations

made more than 150 years ago which prevent the operator from acting promptly to stop homes and fields being flooded. Recently farmers were so desperate they took the law into their own hands and cut through a flood bank to release millions of gallons of water which were threatening a village, farmland and cattle. The system was designed to cope with water that would soak through the land, but now things have changed with all the development along the A604 area

1978 06 19

After three years trials a manager of one of Fenland's biggest farms – the 8,000-acre Hiams estate – is convinced that he has softened the impact of two of the worst hazards on the rich black peat – blowing and flooding. Keith Richardson believes that a German-made machine known as a cultipacker will provide better seed beds for root crops. The action of the machine in breaking clods and levelling without causing soil to compact too tightly, is the secret of its success and there is less flooding and blowing. The main problems have come when they hit bog oaks.

1978 06 28

Otter houndsmen are angry at a Government report which comes out strongly against hunting coypu, a large beaver-like rodent with a hearty appetite for farm crops. The pest is now invading the fringe of the fens after fanning out from its Broadland stronghold. The Eastern Counties Hounds, who this year celebrate their centenary, have been hunting coypu in greater numbers since otter hunting stopped eight years ago. Last year they killed more than 200 coypus and this helped hold down their population to about 8,000 in East Anglia

1978 07 11

Service came out of the blue for a Cambridgeshire farmer with combine harvester trouble. It dropped out of the sky in what is claimed to be the first regular air service for farm machinery in distress. A Fenstanton farmer, Mr A. Behagg, uses Ursus-Bizon machines, produced in Poland, and their East Anglian distributors have introduced the 'servicing by helicopter' scheme in a bid to consolidate their foothold in the valuable English market

1978 09 22

The tools used in 44 years of farming near Milton went under the hammer when nearly 500 items ranging from heavy-duty tractors to ancient forks figured in a selling-up sale. The Downham Brothers, Richard and William, farmed about 70 acres of land from 1934. But William died last year and Richard decided to call it a day. A new road scheme has decimated the land, which will now go to other uses including the science park and light industry. An old tumbrel cart went for £40, tractors fetched £800 and £420 while some disc harrows were knocked down for £600 and a mower for £520.

1978 09 28

Coypus, the large beaver-like rodents, could be eliminated more quickly and cheaply if farmers were paid on the numbers they shot, say the Anglian Water Authority. Trapping was an effective, if slow process demanding skill which many farmers did not have. There was difficulty in recruiting the right kind of conscientious man for trapping; it was an extremely lonely job and if he did it too well he did himself out of work. The Government should pay half of the cost because it was to blame for letting the pests into the countryside in the first place, 40 years ago.

1979 01 09

Crucial talks are being held to try to unravel Britain's transport crisis. The immediate threat to fuel supplies has eased but there will be no evening bus services in Cambridge and Ely; Eastern Counties say this is the best way to conserve stocks so that most bus services could operate for as long as possible. Some supplies are still getting through to Ely sugar beet factor where farmers are taking their own crops in with tractors and trailers as road haulage drivers are not crossing picket lines

1979 05 18

Farmers were weighting up the damage caused by the worst fen blow for several years. Fierce winds whipped up the light soil but they were highly localised. The worst affected areas were at

Prickwillow, Stretham, Coveney & Chatteris where there were dust clouds all around but fortunately a cloudburst dampened the fields after an hour's blowing. Elsewhere orchards took a bad buffeting. A fallen tree blocked the Harlton to Haslingfield road for several hours and another fell at Cottenham. An invalid carriage was blown from the A14 at Papworth and two motor cycles collided in the strong winds.

1979 05 23

The Farmland Museum at Haddenham is to close – because it is too successful. It will shut after celebrating its tenth anniversary because the owners, the Delanoy family, say it is eating up too much time and money. It started when their son Craig, then four, collected a few items in a bedroom and invited relations to view them. Since then it has developed an international reputation and attracts thousands of visitors, raising money for charity. Last Saturday alone it had 640 visitors at the village open day and even with voluntary helpers lending a hand they cannot continue.

1979 07 13

The dawn-to-dusk routine of working on a farm 60 years ago was recalled by a Harston man, Alfred Stittle. When he joined the Hays family farm it was a slower pace of life. "I started as a lad earning 6d a day and did thistling and harvesting. Then my wages went up to 29s 3d when I became responsible for looking after the horses. There was a lot of tiring, back-aching work and the hours were long. Now the machines have taken over and we don't have the hard physical side. We get a lot more money but there isn't the same friendliness or contentment", he said.

1979 12 05

Crucial meetings are to be held over plans for saving the Cambridgeshire sugar beet industry. Farmers are being asked to make ten percent cuts when they were already producing less than the present quota. The county has 63,000 acres of beet which is treated at factories like Ely before going on to processing outlets. It is a crop which confronts farmers with many uncertainties over prices for a highly mechanised crop which is expensive to harvest and vulnerable to weather and disease. But the biggest headache is the political wrangle now the Eurocrats of Brussels are casting their shadow over its future.

1980

1980 02 29

Agricultural land prices, p19

A phenomenal epidemic of wheat bulb fly in the 1950s was responsible for nearly one third of the Fenland winter cereal acreage having to be redrilled. The devastation provided the impetus for the development of a whole range of counter-measures by Frank Maskell, an entomologist whose name has become virtually synonymous with the conquest of the cereal menace. He has just retired for the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service, Brooklands Avenue. 82 04 26c

1980 03 26

A new survey of four villages near Newmarket has revealed than none has a gas supply, a doctor's surgery, dispensing chemist, library or secondary school – facilities which city-dwellers take for granted. The trend towards less labour has resulted in many cottages and farm houses being sold or rented to non-farming people. Agricultural workers and the gathering of mums at the school gate have disappeared, accelerating the decay of village life. Public transport has been reduced restricting other employment prospects. Incentives are need to encourage private enterprise to invest in village life 80 03 26b

1980 04 03

With the Common Market haggling over the amount of sugar Britain should be allowed to grow more than 2,250 Cambridgeshire growers have been getting on with the job of drilling this year's crop. The British Sugar Corporation has the capacity to deal with 1.12 million tonnes of sugar from home-grown beet but the EEC want to reduce the total output, which could put smaller factories like Ely out

of business. Some kind of compromise will probably be reached but the sugar mountain is getting nearly as bad as the butter and beef surpluses and farmers are nervous 80 04 03

1980 05 17

Haddenham Farmland Museum has been saved from closure by the generosity of a local firm. Ideson's Garage, Stretham, in conjunction with Lada cars has stepped in and offered half the amount the museum needs to stay alive and extend its facilities and a number of large companies have offered the remaining sponsorship. It will enable the museum to expand to cater for larger groups, including school children 80 05 17

1980 07 12

One of the biggest private houses & the last commercial farm in Cambridge is up for sale. Rectory Farm on Madingley Road, built 16 years ago, is regarded as an outstanding neo-Georgian design with five reception rooms, six bedrooms, two bathrooms and a swimming pool. It is set in three acres of mature gardens & could fetch around £250,000. 80 07 12

1980 08 06

A Manea farmer has come up with a novel kind of horse-drawn vehicle which he is convinced it will double the speed of his five-year-old pony. It comprises a narrow vehicle set in motion by means of a walking platform connected to a gearing system that turns the wheels. But there is still a long way to go before the first horsecycle driver is booked for speeding. 80 08 06

1980 08 15

The old ways have been bought back at New Farm, Tetworth where David Davenport is using a pre-war tractor and former horse-drawn combine, plus a 1907 steam engine to harvest a special crop of thatching straw. It is the first time he has planted long-stem wheat with an eye to cornering part of the thatching straw market and is using the old methods because a modern combine would damage the straw 80 08 15a

1980 09 05

Alan Ashpole OBE, who retired as county land agent last week, has attacked proposals to sell off large chunks of Cambridgeshire's 46,800-acre smallholdings estate. There are 1,270 tenants who farm plots of from two to 160 acres. It is very hard work but gives people the chance to be their own master. Some councillors believe the sale would raise much-needed cash but the land is inflation proof, it is like our North Sea oil, he says. 80 09 05c

1981 01 19

New post for Cambs farmer – John Martin – 81 01 19

1981 02 20

A spectre haunts the narrow streets of Ely and threatens to turn the cathedral city into a ghost town struggling to hold disaster at bay. The closure of the sugar beet factory is a mortal blow for it is the biggest single employer with 215 permanent jobs plus 130 casual workers during the four-month 'campaign'. The agricultural recession has already caused farmers to buy less machinery meaning the closure of the Dorman Sprayer Company and now Standens are shedding 34 jobs. 81 02 20

1981 03 21

Cambridge City Council may go into small-scale farming to try to raise extra money for the ratepayers, buying 20 Hereford store cattle for grazing on Lammas Land and Sheep's Green. The cost could be taken from money earmarked for maintaining the common lands where, under an old law, people can graze cattle, paying a nominal rent of £32 for the right to pasture nearly 200 animals. Most are not really farmers but come together to buy ten animals each and never go near them, taking advantage of rules which prevent the council charging an up-to-date rent. 81 03 21

1981 05 18

A full-scale anthrax alert was declared following the death of a cow at a farm near Tilbrook. A large part of the farm has been disinfected & Bedfordshire county council has erected notices warning people not to enter. It is ten years since the last serious outbreak at Abbotsley. The area escaped the severe national epidemic of 1977 when there were around 100 cases. 81 05 18 & 19

1981 05 26

Simplex, one of the world's leading makers of farm machinery, is to close its Sawston factory. It was started in 1936 by two cousins, the Bond-Smiths, marketing milking machinery from a building in Gwydir Street. In 1957 it became a subsidiary of GEC, the giant electrical firm, which has now agreed in principle to sell Simplex to Acrow, the engineering firm with a base in Saffron Walden. The firm says the deal makes industrial logic, given the state of the economy, and is designed to preserve the maximum number of jobs. The manufacturing plant will be transferred to Maldon and the Sawston works sold off. 81 05 26

1981 09 11

A 100-year-old tradition came to an end as the last cattle and pigs were auctioned Ely livestock market for the last time. During the past few years the market has had less business as more farmers switched from animals to arable farming so the auctioneers, Cheffins, Grain and Chalk have decided to call it a day. At 10.45 Mr John Grain rang the bell for the last time to summon farmers, dealers and onlookers to the final cattle sale. 81 09 11

1981 09 15

With most of the fields in Cambridgeshire recovering from the annual scorched earth policy it is a revelation to discover a handful of farmers trying to find other ways of getting rid of unwanted straw. Straw is an embarrassment for farmers: it costs the earth to transport, takes time and money to bale and delays the turn round of crops. The virtual disappearance of livestock coupled with the intensification of cereal cropping means there is a vast surplus of it. Farmers would need to be compensated for any ban on burning. 81 09 15b

1981 09 25

A deepening cash crisis is hitting glasshouse men. Unless there is a dramatic improvement in prices for lettuce and tomatoes more than half of the growers on the Land Settlement estate at Fen Drayton will go out of business. At one time the estate was successful and people worked hard to build up a successful livelihood, but poor management and cheap imports have hit trade. They get little more than one penny for lettuces that sell for around 14p, but each costs about two pence to grow. 81 09 25

1981 11 19

Granary Court used to be a set of buildings belonging to Home Farm, Madingley, but because of modern-day farming they ceased to be used in 1975. As they were an interesting group of 18th century timbered buildings it was decided to retain as much of them as possible by conversion to houses. But only two of the barns were found to be structurally capable of conversion and incorporated into the new courtyard development. 81 11 19

1981 12 09

Saffron Walden cattle market will close for the last time after its 121st Christmas Fat Stock Show and Sale. It had been held for several centuries but recently has been dealing with only 40 cattle a week because farmers were switching from livestock to more profitable arable farming. In future they will take their livestock to the Cambridge cattle market. 81 12 09

1981 12 18

Austin Sennitt from Stretham is £1,000 richer after winning the beef championship at Cambridge Christmas fatstock show. His 500 kg animal went to a Cambridge butcher, John Farrow. His family have been farming in the area for about 100 years and the cattle are raised on barley grown on the farm. For the first time the championship was closed to anybody who hasn't used the market regularly, which nearly doubled the normal entry list. 81 12 18

1982 02 15

Land Settlement Estates at Fen Drayton and Abington are under threat. Fen Drayton recently lost 10 of its 50 tenants who were forced to close because of bad debts or because they decided to move away. Abington is slightly more secure: its horticultural output is worth £600,000 a year. The LSA was established in the 1930s at a period of depression to provide jobs for unemployed people. Two sons of the original tenants survive at Abington. 82 02 15

1982 04 26

Quenby Price started in 1835 from premises at Kempton, then just before the last war a mill was purchased at Kimbolton which became the site where cereal seed was produced. It launched its Cambridgeshire operation in 1968 at Station Yard, Histon and throughout the 1970s business expanded in the trading of agrochemicals, feedstuffs, fertilisers, seed corn and the buying and selling of grain and oilseed rape. Now a new store enables them to store fungicides and weedkillers from major manufacturers, providing a complete service for arable farmers. 82 04 26a & b

1982 05 24

Slate Hall farm, housed in a neat group of buildings set back from the A604 near Bar Hill is a familiar landmark. When William and Roy Cowell bought it 23 years ago they grew sugar beet and potatoes on the manageable land, mustard on the heavy soil and wheat and barley after both. But now they focus on cereals, oilseed rape, winter beans and peas as break crops. Economically it had to come. Recently they have lost land to the new road. 82 05 24

1982 06 11

The new flying craze, sport and business of microlights has arrived in Cambridgeshire. Taurus Aviation has been set up at Haddenham and with the co-operation of farmers they now have a choice of fields from which they can take off and land. Meanwhile a Haverhill Company is selling an American-made microlight for £3,000 including five hour's free instruction. It can be assembled in half-an-hour and carried on a car roof-rack. 82 06 11 b&c

1982 07 05

One of the worst outbreaks of potato blight for many years is threatening a bumper Fenland crop. The Ministry of Agriculture says the disease is rampant on the East Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk border and could wipe out crops if left untreated. Farmers desperately try to counter it with spray. 82 07 05

1982 07 09

Farmers who pressed for a drainage board to be set up in the Swavesey area have fallen out over the level of rates they should pay for the work. An elaborate drainage scheme was approved which it was claimed would reduce flooding from twice a year to once every decade and pay for itself with increased yields. But farmers on higher land did not want to pay as much as those lower down and the failure to levy rates means the work has been taken over by the Great Ouse River Board. 82 07 09

1982 07 28

Muck-spreading on fields near Barton has infuriated villagers who say the stench is putting them off their food and making them ill. The treated sewage sludge was delivered during the winter but when workers started spreading it people began complaining. The farmer said it was perfectly safe and there would have been no problem if the wind had not blown towards the village. But the smell is obnoxious and he would not use the material again unless AWA found a way of removing it. 82 07 28

1982 09 14

Some say it's a puma, others a panther and possibly even a cheetah – but whatever it is, a big cat has been causing quite a stir around Cottenham. The cat, bigger than a Labrador, has been seen three times, most recently by Mrs Veronica Bailey who looked up from the sugar beet field where she was working to see it staring at her from ten yards away. Robert Norman of Turk's Head Farm, Smithy

Fen saw one run into a field of cattle – it was sandy colour with great big paws - and Reginald and Dora Savidge saw one in their car headlights. 82 09 14

1982 09 15

The 1,500 acre Babraham estate, owned by the family of the late Sir Robert Adeane, has been sold for well over £3 million. It includes farmland, 11 cottages and a 137-acre shoot. But there was no main residence – Babraham Hall and 400 acres were sold to the Agricultural Research Council in 1948. 82 09 15

1982 10 11

More land in southern Cambridgeshire is being turned over to cereals as farmers cut back on sugar beet and potatoes and go for the latest boom crop, oilseed rape. Winter wheat remains the most widely-grown cereal but farmers are using various varieties to reduce the impact of disease. More are also getting rid of surplus straw by burning, a survey shows. 82 10 11

1982 12 16

A gentle coffee-coloured steer made it a happy day for Dick Underwood of Godmanchester at the Cambridge Christmas livestock show at the Cattle Market. The pig championship went to Mr F. Ketteridge of Ashdon, with the reserve title going to Littleton House School, Girton. In the sheep section T. Wakefield of Caxton beat the Boxworth Farming Company for the title. 82 12 16

1982 12 22

The troubled, state-owned Land Settlement Association, set up 50 years ago to provide rural smallholdings for out-of-work miners and other industrial workers is to be axed from next April. The estates at Chawston near St Neots, Potton, Fen Drayton and Abington will go out of business. The office staff will be made redundant and tenant growers will have to fend for themselves. 82 12 22 & a

1983 07 15

A 600-year old barn at Priors Hall Farm, Widdington, given to the nation by farmer Jeremy Robinson, has now been fully-restored by the Linford Building Group. Over half the original timbers had to be replaced and the roof was rebuilt. Now it is the best-preserved barn of its type in the county. 83 07 15 p11

1983 09 06

Land Settlement Association growers are throwing away thousands of lettuces which have been ruined by smuts from stubble burning. The dry weather and high winds have blown more smuts into the air and wreaked havoc for glasshouse growers who cannot keep them out unless they turn off their vital ventilation systems. Other crops are also affected: one grower has been forced to patiently blow her chrysanthemums with a hair dryer before packing them. 83 09 06 p11

1983 09 10

Test-tube baby pioneers Dr Bob Edwards and Mr Patrick Steptoe have joined the movement to ban stubble burning since airborne smuts forced them to stop work. Papworth Hospital has also been affected as smoke has penetrated operating theatres and laboratories, covering instruments and sterile bottles with an oily film. It causes problems for the elderly and people with respiratory problems and no amount of special pleading by farmers can explain away or justify the mass pollution caused by their activities. 83 09 10 p1

1984 02 21

Shepreth animal shelter which on its first year of opening attracted 10,000 visitors is up for sale – lock, stock and llama. Mr & Mrs Terry Willers have built up the menagerie at their Shepreth trout farm over the last five years. It started with their own pet dogs, cats and horses but now includes Shetland ponies, sheep, goats, chipmunks, chinchillas, grass snakes and a llama which is bring trained to give rides to children. If a buyer is not found they will continue with the sanctuary and the children

who found such delight in playing with the dwarf rabbits and guinea pigs will continue to do so. 84 02 21 p13

1984 02 29

A family from Therfield, near Royston, have won a break-through victory in a stubble burning compensation battle. Their claim £48.50 for cleaning up their home after they were smoked out by fumes from stubble burning has been paid by an insurance company. They were able to identify the farmer concerned, successfully charged for their own work in cleaning and their claim involved domestic property. Their win may open the flood gates for farmers to be swamped with claims for thousands of pounds. 84 02 29 p1

1984 03 10

Croxton Park and its entire estate including 14 houses and cottages together with 2,590 acres of farm and woodland have been sold for nearly £10 million. The Georgian mansion now belongs to Christopher Curry or Acorn Computers. Speculation about a sale began when preservation orders on buildings and trees were prepared following suggestions that the estate was to be sold piece by piece. 84 03 10

1984 08 11

A hotch-potch of buildings, some falling down, all built of a mixture of brick, flint, weatherboard and stone at Home Farm, High Ditch Road, Fen Ditton are taking on a new lease of life. Out of them are being created a complex of five dwellings, each costing more than £75,000. Tithe Developments have tried hard to preserve the feel of the farm buildings which are only a few feet away from the calving unit, housing a dozen of the farm's most likeable animals. 84 08 11 p14

1984 08 14

Chivers, famous for its livestock breeding, has put its dairy cows under the hammer and marked the end of an era. The sale was prompted by the Common Market decision to reduce farmers' milk quotas. Mr John Chivers said the decision to sell off the cattle was a difficult one but they had to make the most of every acre and it was more profitable to grow corn. It was the saddest day of his life for head cowman, Mick Pledger when the farm's entire pedigree Jersey herd – established in 1931 – were sold. 84 08 14 p10

1985 01 23

Hundreds of farmers and traders flocked to Milton Road sale ground for the biggest traction auction in the country. Yilmaz Alademir had come all the way from Farmagusta, Cyprus looking for a tractor he could ship home as they were much cheaper in England. A more typical buyer was Gavin Hamilton of Manor Farm, Great Chesterford. He was looking for wheels and rollers among the dozens of machines and implements at the back of the saleground. The sale was started in the early 1940s by Mr Henry Grain & Cambridge auctioneers Cheffins, Grain and Chalk have been pulling the crowds ever since 85 01 23b

1985 02 12

While the villages of North Hertfordshire are kept pretty, their life is draining away. Residents want more homes, more jobs and more life. They complain of lack of shops and public transport but above all it is conservation policies that get the blame for the drift of youngsters to the towns. Tight planning controls prevent the growth of local industry, even in redundant farm buildings which are left to collapse, and the lack of housing and development means no suitable small-scale homes for the young or elderly. Villagers feel like an oppressed minority, always outvoted by town-dwellers on district and county councils, a survey reveals. 85 02 12

1985 03 06

A pay award to farmworkers could force redundancies, farmers warn. It will bring wages to just under £90 a week and the craftsman's rate to over £100. This will hit labour-intensive sectors like livestock and horticulture and force fruit-growers out of business. Farmers are already struggling with milk

quotas, cheap imports and poor potato prices. "We all wish to see the farmworkers with pay as high as possible, but the industry must be earning enough to pay for it first", one said. But the men's chief negotiator described it as "a small struggle in the right direction" 85 03 06a

1985 03 07

Eastern Counties Farmers was set up 80 years ago when seven farmers got together to form a cooperative to trade their produce. Now ECF as a membership of over 7,000 with its own feed mills, seed processing plants, a pork processing manufactory and massive fuel storage. It stretches from the Thames to the Wash with 22,000 agricultural holdings producing a large proportion of the nation's output. They can negotiate with suppliers and buyers to obtain the best deal for their members. 85 03 07 & a

1985 04 01

Work has started on draining 600 acres of water meadow at Swavesey, described as an extremely valuable wildlife refuge. Cambridge Friends of the Earth say farmers' plans to plough up the meadows to grow grain – when Britain has a massive surplus – are financial madness. Every bit of this increasingly rare type of habitat is precious and they are threatening physical action to save the Cow and Mare Fen. But the Internal Drainage Board say people are worrying unnecessarily. 85 04 01

1985 05 09

Every parish in south Cambridgeshire could have its own nature reserve. A start has been made with the church at East Hatley which is kept locked though nesting boxes for birds and bats have been installed and damaged windows allow entry to many winged colonisers. Outside the graveyard has a wide range of chalkland flowers and its rich with butterflies. Other sites include Caxton stone pit, Litlington chalk pit and the former sewage works at Comberton now known as Watts' Wood. None has plants or wildlife of great rarity but they are oases in the desert of arable farming and the last surviving habitats for animals which were once very common. 85 05 09b

1985 06 06

Protestors who have battled for 20 years against the expansion of Stansted bitterly condemned the Government decision to make it London's third airport. It will be a mega-white elephant and people will not travel from the other two major airports to use it, they claim. Excellent farming land would be destroyed and it will open the way for the development of a concrete urban sprawl with thousands of acres of factories, offices and houses, they warn. 85 06 06b & c

1985 06 21

Cambridgeshire County Council is to buy Mare Fen at Swavesey to conserve it as a breeding ground for rare birds, stopping a drainage scheme which threatened to destroy the nationally-famous wet grazing meadows. The controversy started five years ago when the Anglian Water Authority announced a scheme to prevent frequent flooding in Swavesey, Over and Willingham. This would have involved ploughing Mare Fen up for cereal growing. Now it will be left out of the scheme without affecting the rest. 85 06 21

1986 02 10

Record low temperatures plunged Mid Anglia into the ice age, sparking chaos on the roads. At Boxworth experimental farm experts predicted another February low of minus 12.4 degrees C (9.7F). The big freeze left broken-down cars and lorries littering roads. Many trucks would not start because of iced-up fuel lines and Murkett's 24-hour breakdown service said "In a word, its chaos" 86 02 10

1986 02 17

Farmworkers are pressing for a 60 per cent pay rise to bring them in line with industrial workers. They want a minimum wage of £140 for an ordinary farmworker, up from the present basic rate of £89.70, together with a reduction in the working week from 40 to 25 hours. Their productivity is the best of any industry in Britain with an acceptance of technological change and the introduction of new

working methods. The claim would only affect the 22 per cent of farms that actually employ labour and these were the very large farms that could afford the increase, the Union claims. 86 02 17

1986 02 18

Manea farmer Philip Barnes has spent almost a decade perfecting a cycle for his farm horses to ride. His unique 'Horsical' which relies entirely on good old-fashioned giddy-up power, really works. Jester the cart horse plods along on a moving platform connected to a gearing system which turns the hefty wheels of the vehicle and enables it to go for longer journeys at higher speeds. But no-one in the village seems particularly bothered by it 86 02 18

1986 07 17

The Powell family started to make cheese at Sutton in 1918 when there was more money in Cambridgeshire cheese than milk. But during the Second World War it was only produced sporadically when milk was available that would not keep. Later Baden Powell bought up all the Sutton Dairies and kept going with milk and cheese until the 1960s. The whole enterprise eventually went to Bridge Farm Dairies of Mildenhall. 86 07 17

1986 07 28

Months of uncertainty for the Trumpington-based Plant Breeding Institute have been ended with confirmation that parts are to be sold to the private sector and others amalgamated with a newly-created Plant Science Institute. Staff may be relocated and some research might halt completely. The sugar beet programme has already been wound up and one man now tends the gene bank of varieties – 7,000 for barley alone – from which much of its celebrated work makes its humble beginnings. 86 07 28a

1986 09 11

A 100-year old tradition has come to an end as cattle and pigs were auctioned at the last livestock market to be held in Ely. It was a particularly sad day for the auctioneer, John Grain, who first started work exactly 48 years ago to the day at the market founded by his grandfather, Arthur Trett Grain. This time there was only one animal to be sold at the final cattle sale – a black Hereford brought along by Sidney King, a farmer of Littleport. The other part of the weekly market, the poultry, produce and furniture auctions will continue as usual. 86 09 11

1986 09 25

More than half of the growers at the Fen Drayton Land Settlement will go out of business next year unless there is a dramatic improvement in the prices of lettuces and tomatoes. While lettuces sell for 14p each in the shops, the grower gets just 1p while his costs amount to 2p. At Abington the position is less acute with working wives helping their husbands in the hope of improvement. Much of the trouble stems from poor management with the LSA responsible for marketing, distribution and transport costs. 86 09 25

1987 03 09

Agricultural workers' rally

1987 07 01

A new village could be built on farm land behind the Caxton Gibbet. Called Swansley Wood, it would have 3,000 homes with a business park, village centre and landscaped country park. There would be community facilities such as pubs, shops and churches together with indoor and outdoor facilities. But the plan faces stiff competition as there are similar proposals for four other villages in the area while the County Council favours a scheme on the A10 at Stretham. 87 07 01

1987 08 29

Another developer has put in plans for a new village off the A45. Hillson and Twigden want to build 1,500 homes on 200 acres of farmland east of Highfields, near Caldecote. They say it would link up

with rapidly-expanding Hardwick and provide additional schooling and shopping. It did not use top agricultural land and was close to the underused A45 dual carriageway which would be even less used when the A1/M1 link is built. There are already five other plans for a new village between Bourn and Caxton as an alternative to the preferred county council site off the A10 near Ely. 87 08 29

1987 09 04

Plans by house-builder Bovis to build 33 homes for elderly people together with 55 large detached and 54 town houses on the Clay Farm site at Trumpington have attracted opposition from people anxious to keep a wedge of green land between Cambridge and the Shelfords. The site has been at the centre of controversy for some time with county planners saying it should be in the Green Belt. But the city wants to build hundreds of homes to solve a housing shortage 87 09 04

1987 10 05

Village ponds could soon be extinct. They are disappearing at the frightening rate of one every ten days in Hertfordshire, according to a survey. And of those remaining more than 80 per cent are in poor biological condition. For years ponds provided a water supply and were a valuable habitat for animals and rare plants. However the introduction of piped water supplies, the decline of horses as working animals, land drainage and the intensification of farming have led to many being filled in. One that is facing extinction is Reed where the clay floor has cracked and the pond is drying up. 87 10 05

1987 10 14

Sedgeway Business Park at Witchford is full. The light engineering units were converted from farm buildings where pigs used to be bred and many of the companies are producing their own goods on site. The first was Gardner Prototype Manufacturing which has seen business go from strength to strength. They were joined by Knight Interiors, Camboard which makes electronic design circuits and Tertonia Products who employ seven local people producing wiring harnesses for the automotive market. 87 10 14

1987 12 22

More than 500 Christmas turkeys, chicken and geese went under the hammer at Cambridge's turkey auction. Prices for turkeys from 62-83p per lb while chickens fetched 62-72p lb The biggest seller was a king-sized 35lb stag turkey. Meanwhile Mrs Thatcher's turkey, specially selected from Valley Farm, Meldreth, was personally delivered to Downing Street in a limousine by farm owner Tony Burlton who started rearing turkeys at the farm 21 years ago. It was prepared for the oven by the farm's butcher, Brian Collins and taken to a London florist to receive the final presentation treatment 87 12 22

1988 01 19

A revolutionary new compost being cooked up on a Cambridgeshire farm could reduce stubble burning and provide a cheaper way of disposing of sewage in future. Anglian Water has perfected a technique mixing sewage sludge and waste straw to produce old-fashioned, organically rich "farmyard manure" on a farm at Woodhurst which produces compost for mushroom production. They see it as an exciting departure in sludge disposal. 88 01 19

1988 07 11

Farmers in the fens – among the most fertile land in the country – face increasing difficulties as their main asset, the soil, wastes away. Less than one-sixth of the original 572 square miles will be left by 2050, a survey suggests. When the peat becomes thin it exposes a subsoil which can be extremely acidic. Some farmers near Prickwillow are already moving out of high-value vegetable crops like celery and carrots, replacing them with cereals. Ninety percent of peat consists of water. The more it is drained, the more peat shrinks and decomposes 88 07 11a

1988 08 09

Twenty years ago the majority of Ely people were employed either on the land, in agricultural engineering or at the sugar beet factory in Queen Adelaide which closed in 1981. A report in 1985 suggested they should try to attract industry and hundreds of thousands of pounds were spent to buy 12 acres in Angel Drove to create a high-quality science park environment. Now additional plots are being developed on a second phase where Cambridge Electronic Industries has plans to base its subsidiary, Labgear Cablevision. 88 08 09a

1988 11 25

More than 8,300 of the region's farmers have applied to the new Set-aside scheme which pays them to stop farming and help reduce the EEC cereal surplus. Mechanisation has already cut 2,500 farm jobs this year. Crops will not be grown on Radwinter Hall Farm for the first time in living memory. Farmer Westwood is not overjoyed at stopping farming his traditional crops of wheat, barley and beans but after three years of washout harvests his overdraft was so high the bank would have foreclosed on him. Now he will just watch the grass grow on his 350 acres. 88 11 25a

1988 12 13

Thousands of hens will be slaughtered in Cambridgeshire as the salmonella scare means fewer people are buying eggs and farmers cannot afford to keep them. The scare-mongering by certain ministers has affected the livelihood of producers; one says he will have to kill 9,000 hens because of the high cost of feeding them while at Flexon Poultry Farm, Wilburton 3,000 birds are being slaughtered: they would lie to dispose of more but the processing factories are all choc-a-bloc. It is a disaster for the industry. 88 12 13

1989 01 23

Fraud investigators from the Departments of Employment and Social Security have been targeting fenland farms, vegetable packers, gangmasters and employers to weed out unemployment benefit claimants who are working on the land but failing to declare they are doing so. Hundreds have been signed off the jobless register, saving the taxpayer thousands of pounds a week. They are also investigating allegations that some of the gangmasters are collusive 89 01 23

1989 01 25

Farming industry progresses mechanically, problem of wages – 89 01 25a

1989 02 15

The main changes in Cambridgeshire's landscape since the 1930s has been the loss of hedgerows, drainage of wetland, cultivation of pastures and felling of trees. Livestock farming has been overtaken by cereal production as farmers answered the call to feed the nation. But new EEC quotas, 'green' politics and public demands for access have forced a rethink. Now the county council is planning a shake-up of its 45,000 acres of farmland with holdings run on a more commercial basis. Walkers and horse riders could get new routes and country parks are planned. 89 02 15b

1989 02 15

Most Cambridgeshire land is devoted to agriculture, producing cereals, sugar beet and potatoes. Now the County Council has produced a Rural Strategy in response to the European drive to scrap food and highlight conservation matters. It promotes public enjoyment of the countryside, conservation and organic farming, encouraging farmers to seek income from rural businesses, tourism and country museums. But this is a "Walt Disney" ideal of a countryside with no smells or noises and organic farming is folly, a Thriplow farmer warns 89 02 15c

1989 05 11

The sale of 1,000 acres of farming land in Stretham and Waterbeach mark the break-up of part of the estate built up by the outstanding agriculturalist, Sir Frederick Hiam. One of the country's biggest growers of vegetables, he was appointed Director of Vegetable Supplies during the First World War and was knighted in 1924. The Stretham land which he bought in 1926 was part of an estate of about 13,000 acres and is now being sold by the family firm following the death of his only child. 89 05 11c

1989 08 04

A Girton farmer is working night shifts in a supermarket to make ends meet during the poor harvest. He stacks shelves from 8pm until 4pm, before starting in the fields at 8 am. He has been farming all his life but the income has plummeted as rents for the Farm have soared. Now after paying the bills he has barely a penny left. He blames the Government corn levies and high rentals for the downfall of farming as much as poor harvests. Farmers simply cannot survive for three years in a row on the sort of yields they've been getting. 89 08 04

1989 10 21

The Farmland Museum at Haddenham, one of the region's biggest collections of bygones, has celebrated its 20th anniversary but it will close unless new sponsorship is found. Four years ago it was rescued by the United Molasses Company. Curator Mike Delanoy says £5,000 is needed. "The amount involved is only peanuts, but if I had £1 for every person who told me it was peanuts I'd have had my £5,000" 89 10 21a

1989 12 12

Farmland Museum saved by ECDC grant – 89 12 12a

1989 12 28

Ely has gone from gloom to boom over the past 10 years. The closure of the Sugar Beet Factory at Queen Adelaide with the loss of jobs was the biggest blow. The weekly livestock market closed as did Littleport Village College and a number of schools. But now the city, for so long a sleepy backwater in the fens, is about to witness one of the most dramatic periods of change in its entire history. There will be multi-million pound shopping centre, housing estates and industrial areas together with a new community of 1,500 houses between Ely and Cambridge. 89 12 28b

1990 02 22

Top Farm at Toseland remained unchanged for decades as the owners carried on farming as they always had. But when the roof of the farmhouse, a listed building, collapsed, the sole survivor had to move to an old peoples' home. Now the agricultural implements are to be sold. The most modern piece of equipment is a 1947 Fordson Major tractor. Three wooden carts, a winnowing machine, eight-row horse-drawn Smyth seed drill and hand flails are also to be auctioned 90 02 22a

1990 03 02

County Council plans to sell off 24,000 acres of council-owned farmland criticised – 90 03 20b

1990 09 28

Shropshire farms, Barway, problems with poplars and eel worm – 90 09 28a